



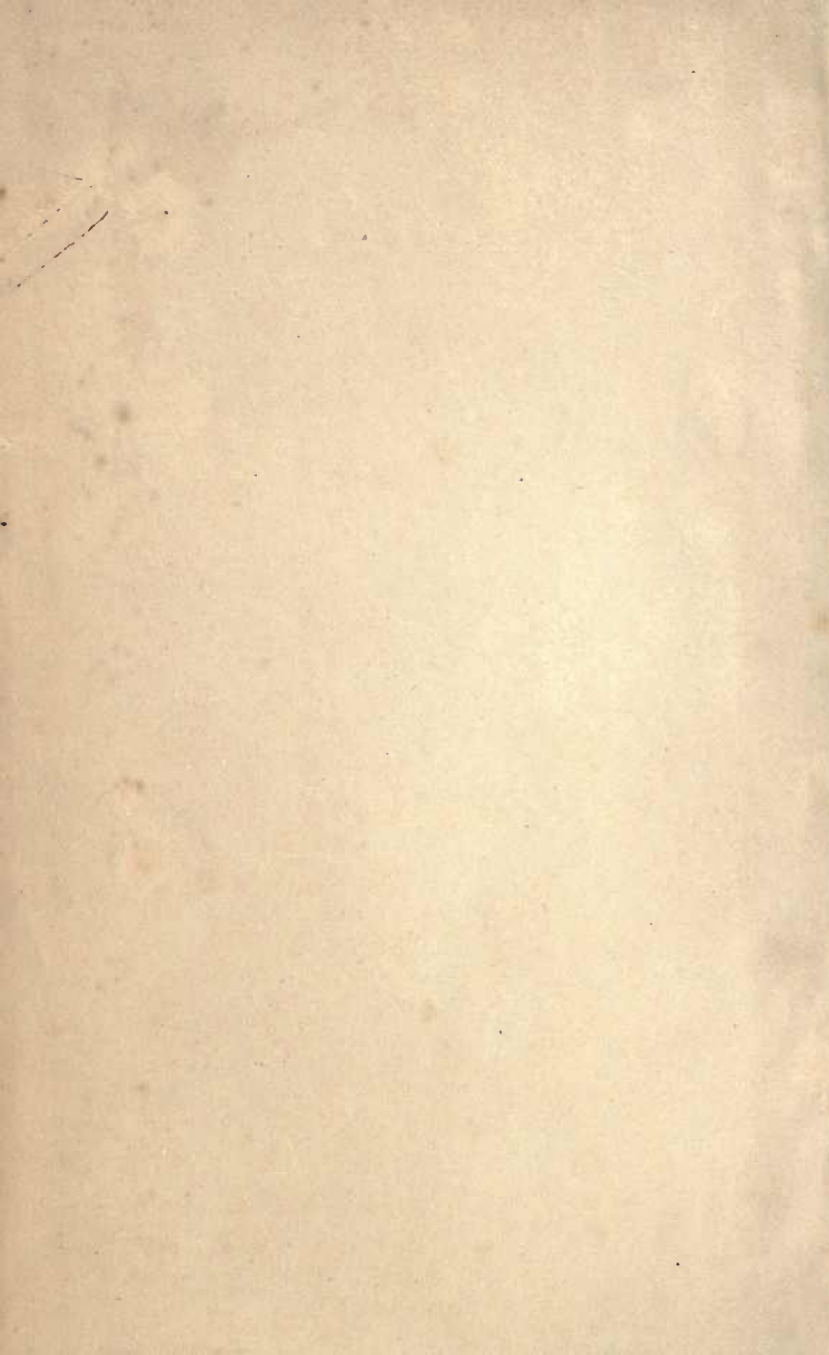
MINVALE

THE STORY
OF A STRIKE

ORME AGNUS

W. E. C. R.
S.
CRAMPTON









"MY DEAR," SAID DONNIMORE, "WHEN SHALL WE BE MARRIED?"

MINVALE

THE STORY OF A STRIKE

BY

ORME AGNUS

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS BY A. J. GOUGH

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TO
MR. EDGAR SMITH
IN REMEMBRANCE OF TWENTY YEARS'
FRIENDSHIP

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CHAPTER I

THE NEW VICAR

As he crossed the bridge which divided his parish from Minvale, Mr. Adamson, vicar of the quiet little village of Mentley, met the dog-cart of Mr. Samuel Slayter, the most important person in Minvale, who had his daughter beside him. Mr. Slayter pulled up his horse and, with a peremptory hand, beckoned the vicar to him. "Morning, Adamson," he said, holding out his hand. "How do you find yourself this morning?"

Adamson could never impart any warmth to his tone when speaking with Mr. Slayter. Mr. Slayter's familiar tone to him was vulgarity. As a matter of fact, he did not admire the most prominent man in Minvale. "Quite well, thank you, Mr. Slayter," he said. And then turning to Mr. Slayter's daughter with a smile, and unconsciously speaking in a different tone, he asked, "And you, Miss Mabel?"

"Thank you, quite well, Mr. Adamson," she said. "Don't I look well? At any rate, I ought to, for I have a schoolboy's appetite."

"You look very well indeed," said the vicar. "And don't disdain that appetite. As long as you

keep it you cannot become a love-sick, languid maiden. How is your mother ? ”

“ Just the same,” interrupted Slayter. “ If she feels a little better one day she is worse the next. But I’m glad I met you ; I thought of driving over this afternoon if I could spare the time. Have you heard the news ? ”

“ You mean the appointment of your new vicar ? ”

“ Oh, you’ve heard, then,” said Slayter, in a slight tone of disappointment.

“ Yes, last night. Donnimore, is it not ? ”

“ Yes, a fellow just thirty. I met Sir James Westgate—the patron, you know—in town the other day. He hadn’t decided, he said, but he should give the subject his best consideration. ‘ Hope you will, indeed,’ I said. Westgate and I are very chatty ; he doesn’t give himself airs with me. ‘ Mind you,’ I said to him, ‘ it is a serious business, Sir James. We want a fellow chock-full of piety, of course,’ I said ; ‘ but they are a queer lot at Minvale, as I know to my sorrow, and we want a fellow with a wise head on his shoulders. We don’t want a fellow, for instance, at all harum-scarum in his notions. None of these new-style radical parsons, Westgate,’ I said, ‘ or he will have the place in an uproar instead of keeping it quiet, as is his duty. I’m the principal churchwarden,’ I said, ‘ and I’ll back him up if he’s the right sort.’ Westgate didn’t say much ; he’d give the matter his best consideration, he said ; but after rubbing it into him like that I’m expecting a sensible fellow, do

you see. As I told him, the right sort of a parson means peace in the parish, the wrong sort a sword. Ha ! ha ! Very neatly put, I thought."

Adamson bowed gravely. Somehow Mr. Slayter always irritated him ; he was so sure of everything and expected everybody to accept his opinions as pure dogma. "I sincerely hope he will prove satisfactory," he said, "and I trust he may see fruit to his labours here. It is a difficult work in Minvale, and I hope that his hands will be strengthened by his flock."

"Well, if he proves a sensible young fellow I think I can be relied on to do my best. Old Bream had no reason to complain of me, I think. As I told him once, religious work goes ever so much more smoothly when you have a business man as churchwarden. You may rely on me. I shall make Donnimore thoroughly at home, and I shall drop him a hint at once as to what's wanted here. If he's a taking young fellow he can do a world of good by his sermons, if they're pitched in the right key. I keep my eyes open, Adamson, and you can take it from me that if some of the windbags yonder"—he turned his thumb in the direction of Minvale—"have their way, there's trouble ahead of us, but I look to Donnimore to give them some sensible advice. By the way, what I stopped you for, Adamson, was to tell you of a bright idea which struck me yesterday. You know when the Dissenters have a new minister they have a tea-party to welcome him. Not a bad idea, I call it, and I thought that we might have a 'welcome' tea-party

to-morrow week. It'll be a sort of formal introduction, don't you see, to the congregation, and our folks like a tea-party. Eh, what do you say ? ”

“ Not a bad idea, I should think, Mr. Slayter.”

“ Pretty good, I call it. We shall want a lively meeting after the tea ; will you attend and be one of the speakers—a sort of holding out the hand to him ? ”

“ Yes,” said Adamson, “ I shall be pleased to attend.”

“ Mabel and I are going now to ask Penivale. I must drive on, for I've some business to attend to. Good morning.”

“ Good morning, Mr. Adamson,” said Mabel, with a saucy smile and a mock bow. “ You haven't said much to me ; but then, it is not your fault.”

Adamson raised his hat with a smile. If he did not care for the father he had a warm regard for the daughter. “ Ever-bright ” he called her sometimes ; but she retorted that he ought to see her when things went wrong. “ I can make a face as long as papa's then,” she explained.

The Rev. Frank Donnimore arrived in Minvale on the following Thursday evening. Adamson had intended to call upon him the following day, but business took him to Manchester, and he was introduced to him at the “ welcome ” tea-party.

“ Mr. Donnimore—Mr. Adamson,” said Mr. Slayter. “ A fellow-brother of the cloth—a worker in the field of righteousness, I may say, Mr. Donnimore.” It was one of Mr. Slayter's mannerisms to

translate a slangy into a religious phrase, as he thought the occasion demanded. What was more remarkable, he had a slap-you-on-the-back tone and look for the slang, and a serious and melancholy manner for the correction.

Adamson looked Donnimore over critically as the latter was introduced to new-comers. He was a sturdily built young fellow above the middle height, and there was no mistaking that he was Irish. His was not the phlegmatic temperament; he was restless with superabundant vitality, and Adamson thought he was a boy still. Indeed, he did not look more than twenty-one or twenty-two.

He gripped Adamson's hand heartily. "I am glad to meet you, Adamson," he said. "I may call you Adamson, may I not? If you will allow me I shall be often over to see you. What lovely surroundings to a—well," with a laugh, "a rather dingy village, if you will allow me to say so. I can see the Peak, or Kinder as I believe you call it, quite plainly from my bedroom window. The sight of it is a tonic for a man. Are you fond of walking, Adamson?"

The elder man smiled. "I find my joints are beginning to get rusty, but I often do my score of miles or more up on the hills yonder."

"Oh, I am glad you are a tramper—that is, if you will take me with you sometimes."

"As often as you like," said Adamson; "I shall be glad of a companion."

Before he had time to reply, Mr. Slayter led him off for another introduction.

It was said in neighbouring villages that the only Minvale news in the local newspaper was an account of a tea-party. Minvale resented the witticism, but Donnimore's predecessor was wont to declare that the tea-meeting was fast becoming a disease. At the present meeting there were some Dissenters, attracted by the social delight. At Minvale the tea-meeting was the poor man's—but especially the poor woman's—ball or garden-party. When the tea was cleared away the "welcoming" began. After the most approved models of Minvale—the Primitive Methodists, Adamson declared, were the most experienced in the art—a lengthy programme had been provided. Mr. Slayter, of course, took the chair, and, after a hymn and a prayer, the chairman delivered his address. Mr. Slayter's public style was so dignified that unkind persons said it was pompous. Adamson said that Mr. Slayter never forgot on a platform that he owned Minvale, and he framed his style in accordance with it. Mr. Slayter raised his hand for complete silence. This, he said, was a momentous gathering. They had assembled to give a very hearty welcome to the Rev. Frank Donnimore, the new vicar of Minvale. Mr. Donnimore was still a young man, but he had been highly recommended, and had done good work in the south of England, and he was sure that if Mr. Donnimore would keep in touch with the leading members of the congregation he would do well. Minvale was a prosperous village, but Mr. Donnimore would find that it had its peculiar ways. He was sorry to say, speaking

as he was among friends and always having the good of the place at heart, that Minvale was hardly the happy and contented place it ought to be. Trade was not so brisk as it had been, and he was sorry to find that some senseless people seemed to think that the masters ought to have no profit. He was a self-made man, and he was proud to let everybody know it—there was no nonsense about him, and if he could make a fortune others could, if they worked as hard and kept from strong drink. He was proud to tell their new vicar that he was an abstainer, and he hoped he and Mr. Donnimore might do a great temperance work in the parish. He could tell Mr. Donnimore in that part of Minvale he owned he did not allow a public-house and wished they could all be swept away.

But to return to his subject. There were fire-brands in Minvale, he was sorry to tell Mr. Donnimore, who were sowing discontent between masters and workmen, and he warned all who were present against listening to the frothy talk of agitators. Mr. Donnimore, he felt sure, would do his best to keep his flock out of dangerous mischief. At an early opportunity he should have a private conversation with the new vicar, he hoped, and acquaint him with the needs of the little town. He extended a hearty greeting to Mr. Donnimore, who, so long as he did his duty, which he felt quite sure about, would find in him a faithful friend.

Adamson was the next speaker. He made a very short speech, but he asked those present if differences should arise between their vicar and

themselves not to sulk over them, but to deal openly with him, as half the trouble of the world was caused by misunderstandings.

Penivale, the incumbent of Doxley, was the next speaker, and then Donnimore got up to respond. Adamson, who had already taken a liking to him, was greatly disappointed with his speech, as the rest of the audience were. He was nervous and stumbling and involved, and he concluded very abruptly. Mr. Slayter leaned across to whisper in Adamson's ear, "Very poor, very poor, indeed, Adamson; I am greatly disappointed," with a lugubrious shake of his head.

"Pure nervousness," said Adamson. "If I am any judge he will make a splendid speaker later on."

"It will reflect upon us all, Adamson. This will be all over Minvale to-night. I am greatly disappointed."

"Give him time, Mr. Slayter."

"Well, let us hope his ideas, at any rate, are right. You notice that I laid it on to-night? I saw some fellows present that wanted a strong hint. I shall rely on him to back me up. I'll tell you what it is, Adamson; some of those Dissenting local preachers are a complete pest. But they'll not bully me, you can bet. They'll have to learn who's master."

Adamson was anxious to know how Donnimore had acquitted himself in the pulpit, and on Monday morning stopped the baker from Minvale to inquire. Peter Barn, like many in Minvale, prided himself on his taste in sermons.

“ Well, Peter,” he said, “ were you at church yesterday ? ”

“ Ah were, sir.”

“ Well, how did Mr. Donnimore get on ? ”

“ Yo’ mean his preachin’, sir. Bad, very bad. It’s a come-down for us, though we could never howd our heads very high in Mr. Bream’s day. We conna look anybody in th’ face to-day, hardly.”

“ Why ? ” asked Adamson. “ Was the preaching so bad ? ”

“ Bad ? Ay, that it were, sir. Why, he didna preach ; he read his sermons.”

Adamson smiled to himself. It was a prejudice, proof against all argument. If the greatest pulpit orator in the land went to Minvale and read his discourse Minvale would declare it had listened to a poor sermon.

“ Oh, you mustn’t condemn him yet,” returned Adamson. “ Mr. Donnimore is nervous ; he has not found his feet among you yet. I am sure, Peter, you have got a capital man.”

“ Maybe, maybe,” said Peter, shaking his head ; “ but it’s none very encouragin’ to a churchman. Th’ Methodies and th’ Independents are crowin’ to-day, above a bit.”

CHAPTER II

MINVALE AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

MINVALE is not a pretty village. It has been called with some truth a blot on a fair landscape. It is built on the slope of a hill that rises abruptly from the banks of the Min, which is not an inviting stream. The Min begins its career by tumbling in a flashing pellucid stream down the mountain-slopes, but while it is little more than a brook it begins to lose its beauty. Its banks have been found to be desirable positions for factories and bleach works, and by the time it reaches Minvale it is a turbid and odorous stream. It leaves the confines of the village debased past redemption. From the railway the traveller gets but a brief glance of the lower end of the village, with the turbid stream and a hideous conglomeration of workshops on its banks, and he is glad to forget it and let his mind linger on the unsurpassed glories of the Peak district, which begin soon after Minvale has been passed.

Minvale owed its existence as a manufacturing village to Mr. Samuel J. Slayter, and it was his especial pride that his industry and business talent had converted it from a dead-alive if pretty spot to a "hive of industry"—to use his favourite phrase.

Mr. Slayter made himself and made Minvale, he was fond of repeating, being very proud of his handiwork.

Among its other claims to notice Manchester was the birthplace of Mr. Slayter. Many of its citizens have raised themselves from obscurity into the full daylight of the world, and Samuel Slayter was one of its most industrious sons. He was the son of a respectable mechanic, and at the age of fourteen was sent to work in a cotton-mill. On his twenty-second birthday his maternal aunt died and left him a legacy of ninety pounds. He was an abstainer, a non-smoker, thrifty, and ambitious, and with his small fortune entered into partnership with a friend of his who was five years older, but who had still less capital. But they were untiring workers, and had unlimited faith in themselves. They invested their money in a small cotton-spinning factory at Minvale which had been unworked for more than a twelvemonth. Minvale at that time was little more than a hamlet.

The previous tenant had failed, and the factory, which derived its motive power from a water-wheel, had stood with its machinery rusting when the firm of Slayter & Pilling took it on a lease at a nominal rental. They made up for their lack of capital by strict attention to business. They toiled harder than any of their small band of workmen, but for two years they were trembling on the verge of bankruptcy. Often on a Saturday morning neither man had a shilling in his pockets, for Friday night is "pay neet" in the cotton districts. But at last the corner was turned, more hands were taken on,

the mill was enlarged, and fitted up with newer machinery. Their good luck from that time was almost a proverb. When other mills in the surrounding district were idle Minrock Mills were at work. It was whispered that both partners were "knowing," which is often a polite way of saying unscrupulous. They acted on the assumption that in business your own existence or a rival's is involved, and keenness, not generosity, must be the guiding principle of the man who will succeed. In after years Mr. Slayter boasted that he had never injured a man nor tried to undercut him wantonly. He had on several occasions assisted individuals and firms who, but for his help, must have gone under. He accounted it to himself for righteousness that through business alone had his prosperity involved others in ruin.

When the factory had become so prosperous that it was no longer necessary for the partners to work in their shirt-sleeves like the rest of the workmen, Mr. Pilling, who could not deny himself personal indulgence, betook himself to a life of leisure, which meant that he rarely went near the mills, but drank deep and often. There were many quarrels about it, and at last Mr. Pilling gratified his partner by consenting to be bought out. His share amounted to about fifteen hundred pounds. In three years he drank himself into a lunatic asylum.

Mr. Slayter at once set about making himself supreme in Minvale. He took over most of the land on which Minvale now stands on a long lease, and at once began to build a more commodious

cotton-factory and a little higher up the stream a print and bleach works, as well as cottages for his work-people. To use his own words, he made Minvale, and at the time Donnimore became vicar three-fourths of the inhabitants lived in his houses and, with a few exceptions, were in his employ.

Three years after Pilling had left him he married the daughter of a Manchester physician and built himself a handsome residence on the hill-side above the town. In his days of struggle he had affected a bluff and hearty manner that had won him some popularity, for the cotton-operative is a democrat; but when he took up his residence at The Hollies he became the great employer who was far above his employés. He was driven to the office every morning by a liveried coachman, he expected caps to be touched to him, and his speech became more dignified. In short, he had become a gentleman.

As the years went by his prosperity increased. Another cotton-mill, owned by Abel Bentley, was erected a mile lower down the Min, but Minvale was essentially Mr. Slayter's. He had purchased a colliery four miles away to supply his works with fuel, and in conjunction with Bentley he owned a small iron-foundry, and he had been made a county magistrate and received invitations to dinner from some of the gentry in the neighbourhood, who were sometimes to be found at his own table. His only son was in the army, and had won a great reputation as a polo-player. Mr. Slayter felt he had prospered as he deserved.

Towards the end of the week Donnimore called

on Adamson, who saw he was not in good spirits, and guessed that the younger man was burning to speak of his work to a sympathetic and understanding listener. Adamson made the opportunity at once. "It is really too soon to ask, Donnimore, but how do you like Minvale?"

"I hardly know yet," he said, with a chastened smile. "You see, it is so novel to me, and seems so difficult. Until now I have only known quiet villages at home—Ireland, you know—and in Hampshire. It is my first acquaintance with a manufacturing district, and I am rather at a loss. After a southern hamlet it is so different. For one thing, I can hardly understand the speech of the people—it is almost a foreign language to me—and I have to ask them to repeat what they say time after time, and even then I am often at a loss. I have been engaged the last four days in making the acquaintance of my flock, but it is rather trying and ineffectual work when most of them speak another language, or at least speak with a foreign intonation. Perhaps you will not believe me, but it was not until yesterday that it dawned upon me that 'bur' is the local pronunciation of 'but,' and 'baggin' means 'afternoon tea.'"

Adamson smiled. "I went through the same experience many years ago," he said. "You will soon get used to that. Of course it is the Lancashire dialect with a little rural admixture, but I am sure you will think it picturesque when you come to know it. But what do you think of your flock?"

He hesitated a little. "Good material, in the rough, I should think, Adamson. To me their manners seem rather rough, but I feel sure they are warm-hearted."

"Bravo!" cried Adamson. "I congratulate you on your penetration. Some people do not discover so much in a score of years."

"But their lives and work!" said Donnimore. "After seeing the life of the open air these factories seem terrible. I was horrified to see young children—even girls—working in the factories."

"Yes," said Adamson, "it is a horror to me, but it will go on until the law steps in and prevents it. I am afraid, Donnimore, you are not come to a bed of roses here. You heard Mr. Slayter speak about those who were bent on making trouble?"

"It did not seem to me very tactful to speak in the way he did, considering the object of the meeting."

Adamson smiled. "It is not Slayter's pre-eminent virtue—for tact is a virtue, I always maintain. The truth of the matter is, times have been bad in the cotton trade for over two years, and wages have been low. Things are improving now, and Slayter's hands assert that he promised the wages should go back to the old level directly there was improvement. There is talk of a strike, but I pray God we may be spared that."

"I hope so," said Donnimore, with a slight frown. "I look upon a strike as so utterly foolish as to be criminal."

Adamson looked up with the shadow of disap-

pointment on his face. "I hope we may be spared a strike," he repeated; "but I am afraid of it unless grievances are redressed. You will find there is need of many improvements in Minvale. Unfortunately, many of Mr. Slayter's 'hands'—to use the vile phrase so common up here—are his tenants also, and that gives him an unfair advantage."

"My sympathies are with the poor, of course," said Donnimore.

The shadow crossed Adamson's face again at the younger man's tone. "You will have a fine field for sympathy in Minvale, Donnimore."

"Do you know Mr. Slayter intimately, Adamson?"

"I have known him for more than a decade now."

"I've a confession to make," went on Donnimore, with a laugh. "I have not seen much of Mr. Slayter yet, but what I have seen I do not like. We shall not hit it, I am afraid. I paid a ceremonious visit the other day, and I am going to dine there on Thursday. It may be my fault, but his manner irritates me, Adamson. There are some men with whom I am tempted to disagree even when our views coincide. I am afraid, very much afraid, he is one of them. He talks as though there was only his opinion to be considered in the parish, and he told me it would be my first and chief duty to deal sharply with those of my flock who were restless and dissatisfied."

"Confidence begets confidence, my dear fellow, and I don't mind telling you that I, too, do not care

for Mr. Slayter, though I hope for your own peace you will put a curb on your prejudices. You'll not be able to fall asleep in Minvale, I assure you, my dear fellow. But there! I must drive you away now—I have a confirmation class to meet. What do you say to a tramp on Kinder yonder to-morrow? Can you spare the time?"

"I should like it very much, but I don't think I ought to be taking a holiday at this stage."

"Then it's settled," returned Adamson, with a smile. "We will have a day there to-morrow and talk over matters. There's a train leaves Minvale at 8.40 for Greenfield, where we will betake ourselves to the hills."

"Weather permitting?"

"My dear Donnimore, you don't mean to say——"

"That I fear a wetting? Oh no. I only——"

"Rain or shine, we will go. There are some wonderful scenic effects up yonder when the rain drives. If it looks at all threatening bring your mackintosh, wear some workmanlike clothes, and in any case bring a few sandwiches."

It was a cloudy but fine and bracing day. They took the right side of Kinder and passed down the Edale valley, at that time with no railway to destroy the solitude. Donnimore was an enthusiastic lover of Nature, and the tramp and tonic air awakened his Irish spirit to the full. He laughed, he scampered up the hill-side, and when they stood on the summit of the pass and looked down the valley he

burst into an Irish song, "The Lonely Glen," in a full and rich baritone. He came to earth before the last verse with an embarrassed laugh. "Excuse me, Adamson; as a matter of fact I am not really insane."

"I shall be very pleased if you are often insane in that way when with me," said Adamson. "You have a beautiful voice, Donnimore. I shall expect you to assist in our concerts."

"No, no, I'm too fearful to sing before an audience. Preaching is strain enough. I often wonder how I had the courage to become a cleric. But isn't this glorious, Adamson? The great hills always fill me full of strange thoughts—indescribable thoughts. Do you ever feel that way?"

"These hills always uplift me. If my flock have been worrying me with petty matters I come here and forget it all. Are you getting tired?"

"I could walk twenty-four hours on end in this air."

"Then we'll go to Castleton and lunch there. A stout heart to a stiff brae, for yonder is the road, and yonder is Mam Tor."

"I shall love your Derbyshire hills," cried the new vicar. "'The mountains skipped like rams'—just think of it, Adamson! Who built these stone walls here? Look at yonder walls climbing the mountain-side! What manner of patient workers were they that piled stone on stone in that fashion?"

"I've often wondered, Donnimore. The labour must have been immense. I take it as characteristic

of the English ; incredible labour that a man may have his possessions to himself."

[The Wynyats, that towering limestone gorge that makes such a magnificent approach to Castleton village with its ruined castle dominating it, made Donnimore silent. At last he took off his hat and murmured, "Allah Akbar—God is great."

They had a comfortable lunch at the inn, and then they climbed to the ruins of the castle—that Peveril of the Peak of Scott's story, and then Donnimore insisted on exploring the cavern at the foot, and would have explored the Speedwell cavern, too, if Adamson had not pleaded a meeting at which he must be present. "Then you promise to bring me here again soon, Adamson," he said.

"I'll bring you here again, Donnimore, as soon as we can both spare a day. But it is not over yet ; we have now to tramp to Chapel."

"What Chapel ?"

"The little town of Chapel-en-le-Frith, where we shall take train for Minvale. The road will not be as interesting as on our outward journey, and I shall want a ballad or two."

"Anything you ask, Adamson, after bringing me here. The Wynyats you call this defile ? The only fault I find with your Derbyshire is that you did not choose names more expressive of its grandeur. The Wynyats is good enough for some rambling old farmhouse. I should call this the Gorge of Fantasy, or something poetical."

"The Irishman is sure to come to the surface sooner or later," laughed Adamson.

By hard walking they caught a convenient train and were back in Minvale in good time. "Thank you, Adamson," said Donnimore; "you'll find, I am afraid, that it will be difficult to shake me off."

CHAPTER III

THE MIND OF THE MASTER

DONNIMORE threw himself with a whole-hearted enthusiasm into the work of knowing his parish. Minvale was not a clean nor sanitary little town ; in fact, Adamson was not wrong when he told the new vicar he would find that some parts of it could justly be called slums. Donnimore set himself to the task of visiting every house, and where the inmates were members of no religious denomination he invited them to church. He met with many rebuffs, but he would not take offence, and his hearty laugh and pleasant manner won him the regard of many. The day after the tramp in Derbyshire he was due to dine at The Hollies, an invitation which he had put off—and thereby rather displeased Mr. Slayter—until he had seen something of his parish.

The Hollies, built of dressed stone and with a pillared portico, gave an impression of solidity. It stood on the hill-side, with a copse behind it that sheltered it from the north wind, and was approached by a winding avenue. It was nearly two miles from Minvale, and there was a magnificent view from the

terrace as one looked over Minvale to the hills beyond.

Mr. Slayter welcomed him effusively. "I did not invite any friend on this occasion, my dear Donnimore," he said; "just ourselves—that is, me and my daughter. My wife, as perhaps I told you, is a great invalid; she has been sorely afflicted for years, and it is not often she comes downstairs. She has not left her room for several weeks. I am afraid," with a lugubrious sigh, "she will never leave it again."

"I am very sorry to hear it," said Donnimore. "When she is able I should be glad to be presented to her."

"Very kind of you, my dear sir. If you like we'll look in on her now. This way, please."

"Emma," said Slayter, "Mr. Donnimore, our new vicar, wishes to make your acquaintance. I told him this was one of your bad days."

Mrs. Slayter was a thin and fragile woman, several years younger than her husband. On her pain-seamed face there were still traces of her good looks left, and to Donnimore, who was very impressionable, it seemed the face of a good woman. Before pain and sickness had worn it she was a very beautiful woman. Mr. Slayter was fond of declaring that what he had wanted in a wife was good looks and genteel manners, as he was capable of seeing to the money part of the concern himself, and he often expressed his contempt for those who married for wealth.

As a young woman Mrs. Slayter had considerable

individuality, and her will often clashed with her husband's, but with the coming of ill-health she was unable to oppose herself to her domineering husband and had gradually lost all initiative. Her pleasures were chosen for her; she was to enjoy what her husband thought she ought to enjoy; she was treated as a valetudinarian who would not rouse herself; and as her feebleness increased she ceased to indicate, save on rare occasions, what her preferences were. It was ever, "What do you think, Sam?" and what Sam thought she had resignedly brought herself to think also. She had many regrets in her married life. A well-bred and cultured lady, with a passion for social service, she thought she saw in her marriage with the prosperous cotton-lord an opportunity to gratify her tastes and desires. Gradually disillusionment came; her strength of will was not to be compared to his, and, as a consequence, he dominated her. She had to win him to more decent manners and try to moderate his hectoring disposition by flattery that seemed so coarse to her that it shamed her. It is the failing of the self-satisfied to believe that they are pre-eminent for the virtues and graces in which they are most lacking, and Samuel Slayter prided himself on his well-bred manners, and described his wife's penchant for the minor graces and decencies of life as "finicking."

"I am sorry to see you so ill, Mrs. Slayter," said Donnimore. "I do hope you may soon be better. Continued ill-health is something outside my personal experience."

“ Oh, Emma isn’t what you may call ill,” interposed Slayter. “ She isn’t strong, of course ; but she will give way to her fancies, as I tell her. Don’t I, my dear ? ”

Mrs. Slayter flushed slightly, but smiled. “ My husband has never been ill, Mr. Donnimore,” she said ; “ he does not understand the fancies of the invalid.”

“ When I’ve felt out of sorts I’ve never given way to it,” said Slayter proudly, turning to Donnimore. “ When I’ve had a bad cold or a twinge of rheumatism I’ve said to myself, ‘ Now, Sam, my boy, pull yourself together ! You can’t afford to be ill, with so many things to look after.’ And I’ve managed to rub along, Donnimore. It’s all a question of will-power.”

Donnimore’s face flushed slightly, and he turned to Mrs. Slayter : “ You have not been able to come to church for some time, Mrs. Slayter ? ”

“ No, to my regret I have not been for more than a year.”

“ Then, with your permission, I’ll look in some afternoon or evening, and we’ll read evensong together.”

She flushed with pleasure. “ Oh, that would be a pleasure, Mr. Donnimore, if it would not be troubling you too much.”

“ It will be my pleasure also, Mrs. Slayter.”

“ She’s been wishing she could have one of them telephone arrangements you read about between the church and her room,” interposed Slayter. “ But I tell her ‘ No ’ ; if she wants to go to church she

can if she'll only rouse herself. Halloa, Donnimore, there goes the gong! We must be seeing about the inner man. Come along."

Donnimore turned to the invalid and held out his hand, and as he took hers he raised it to his lips. "I hope you may regain health and strength, Mrs. Slayter. I am quite sure your being incapacitated is Minvale's loss."

"Don't encourage my wife into thinking she's ill, for heaven's sake," whispered Slayter as they made their way to the dining-room. "Our whole object is to rouse her from her fancies. It has been a great trial to me, I can tell you, that she has allowed herself to get into this low state."

Donnimore answered nothing; he had been attracted by Mrs. Slayter and repelled by her husband, and he was wondering whether his impressions were to be trusted. At college it had been a favourite dictum with him that first impressions were always right, but he had lived long enough to doubt it. His college tutor had once told him that for first or any other impressions to be right a man must be infallible.

Mabel Slayter he had met twice before, and she welcomed him genially. She was a girl rather above the middle height, healthy, agile, and decidedly good-looking; indeed, as Donnimore thought, when flushed with animation she was really beautiful. She had her mother's liquid eyes, her mother's mobile mouth, her mother's quick play of feature, and she seemed always in lively spirits. Donnimore,

as he ate his dinner, thought that the mother and daughter redeemed the Slayter abode.

"How do you like Minvale?" asked Miss Slater, over the soup, fixing her eyes intently on the vicar, as if challenging him to candour.

"I am not impressed with Minvale's claim to prettiness, Miss Slayter, but I am already an enthusiast regarding its surroundings. My good friend Adamson has taken me over Kinder to Castleton, and henceforward I am an adorer of Derbyshire."

"Oh, I am so glad, for your sake, Mr. Donnimore. Do you see, it is my test question—Does he or she love the Peak scenery? Does he or she look upon it as the height of earthly bliss to be upon its slopes? If I had been told you were an angel of light I should have had my doubts about you, Mr. Donnimore, if you had failed regarding the Peak."

"I am glad I have emerged triumphantly from the test, Miss Slayter," laughed Donnimore. "I shall be often on the hills yonder; indeed, I have made Mr. Adamson promise to take me again soon."

"He has promised several times to take me across Kinder to the Snake Inn, but he has failed. I wish I might come with you on one of your tramps. I assure you, Mr. Donnimore, I shall not break down under thirty miles, and you and Mr. Adamson can talk 'shop' to your hearts' content. May I?"

"My dear," interposed Slayter, "Mr. Donnimore will think you a very forward young lady. You can see, Donnimore——"

"If Mr. Donnimore will not think me meek and

insipid he can credit me with any other vices he thinks fit. May I come, Mr. Donnimore ? ”

“ I—I should be delighted,” said the vicar, with a glance at Slayter. “ I am sure Adamson would be delighted too.”

“ My dear ! my dear ! ” came Slayter’s voice, fondly paternal ; “ it would not be altogether—I may say, seemly.”

“ Papa ! ” in a tone of shocked inquiry. “ Do you think that—that the two vicars are not all that they should be—or either of them ? ”

Donnimore laughed, and Mr. Slayter smiled painfully. “ I—I am afraid, Donnimore, that she likes talking a little wildly. You mustn’t give people a chance to talk, my dear.”

“ If the two vicars will take me I’ll risk scandal,” she said demurely.

“ Scandal ! My dear, nobody would think of scandal in connection with such a thing, but all the same——”

“ I am going, papa, you meant to say ? You don’t think Minvale pretty then, Mr. Donnimore ? ” turning to the vicar with a look of mischief in her eyes that Donnimore did not understand.

“ Frankly, Miss Slayter, I do not. It is, to me, rather—well, depressing.”

“ What a depraved taste, Mr. Donnimore ! ” feigning surprise. “ Have you not stood on one of the bridges and watched the tumbling stream—the same, by the way, you saw in the Kinder—and *smelt* it, and noticed the picturesqueness of the rickety, ruinous, dirty buildings on the banks ?

You have not an eye for the picturesque, I am afraid, Mr. Donnimore."

"I am afraid not—it looked to me rather squalid, Miss Slayter," said Donnimore, with a smile.

"No qualifications, please, Mr. Donnimore—*utterly* squalid. Minvale is a hideous blot on the scenery."

Mr. Slayter thought it time to interpose; it was a sore subject with him, as his daughter well knew. "Oh, come, Donnimore, you are like my daughter, and don't look on things in the right light. You can't have trade and manufactures and everything the same as a little fairy palace, you know. Minvale is one of the most go-ahead little places in the north since I took it in hand, I can tell you. Pretty villages are all very well in their place, but you can't make a fortune in a pretty village. You must have factories. Where would this country be without its factories and its coal-mines—and—and its trade? As a matter of fact, compared with some places, Minvale, to my mind, is rather pretty still. A hive of industry, as my friend Browning calls it, and he isn't far wrong. If you could see the difference in the amount of work done here now and when I came here first you would not believe it could have been made as flourishing in the time. It was as sleepy a place as any one could find, but I set to work and altered all that, y' know. We're a go-ahead community, and shall be more so if we can put a sprag in the wheel of the rascals who are trying to make trouble."

"I suppose," said Donnimore doubtfully, seeing that he was expected to speak—"I suppose that

you can't have manufactures without spoiling the face of Nature ? ”

“ Of course you can't, my dear fellow. The face of Nature is all right in its place, but you can't live on it, y' know. When you've come to understand things a little better you will see that factories are as pretty in their way as—as—scenery.”

“ Papa is right so far, Mr. Donnimore. There is no reason at all why a manufacturing village, or town either, should be squalid. And Minvale is squalid, without qualification. Stand on Jackson's Bridge and look at the hideous, dilapidated buildings on either side the smelly stream. And then look at the hideous houses. I call them slums, Mr. Donnimore, hideous slums, and the people are as hideous as their dwellings. They are like the pig-styes they live in and the filthy factories they work in, and their speech is as hideous as themselves. Before you have been here a month, Mr. Donnimore, you'll wish yourself back among the decent, cleanly people you lived amongst—in Wiltshire, wasn't it ? ”

“ My dear ! my dear ! ” interposed Slayter, with a note of irritation. “ It is unfair to try and set Mr. Donnimore against the place. He'll find there are a lot worse places than Minvale when he gets used to it—a thousand times worse.”

Donnimore did not reply, but smiled good-humouredly.

“ I often wish papa would sell his business and let us go and live away from here—Matlock or Buxton, or in Wales. And I am sure it would do poor mater good. The people here are rough and

ill-mannered and disrespectful. I don't think any of papa's hands ever speak of him except as 'Sammy' or 'Sam,' when they don't give him a nickname; and I'm 'Mab Slayter' or 'Slayter's dowter' to all of them, I know. But there, Mr. Donnimore, when I once begin on the subject of Minvale I can talk for a week. I hope you will forgive me, for I know, as a rule, the clergy feel defrauded if they are not monopolising the conversation. What is your favourite topic, Mr. Donnimore? I'll promise to listen for the next five minutes."

"My favourite occupation is listening, when the conversation is so interesting," said Donnimore, with a bow.

"When I want people to enjoy themselves conversationally I encourage them to talk shop," said Mabel. "And so—were you satisfied with your congregation on Sunday?"

"A much larger congregation than I have been accustomed to," returned Donnimore, and the conversation took a parochial turn till Miss Slayter left the table to visit her mother.

Mr. Slayter sighed with relief when his daughter had gone. He had been looking forward to this dinner that he might put the vicar's feet on the right path before there was any danger of him blundering, from lack of guidance, on to the wrong one, and his daughter's airy banter had irritated him. "My daughter is very harum-scarum in her talk, you know, Donnimore, but she is a sensible girl at bottom," he began.

"I am sure of it," said Donnimore quietly.

"She knows as well as I do that business must be done, and you can't have everything looking pretty when it's a question of business. I'm as fond of pretty scenery as any man, but you simply can't have it if you must find work for a population. Not that you get any gratitude for finding work for them; they seem to think that you've no right making any profit yourself. Things are rather queer in Minvale just at present."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, very queer. You see, trade isn't as good as it has been, and as it might be. The margin of profit is very small, I assure you, and you need to have your wits about you to make any at all. But, in spite of all, some of the sort that are never satisfied are inclined to make trouble. I was talking with Bentley and Omer—employers in the neighbourhood, y' know—about it no longer ago than yesterday, and they agree that I'm right. You see, they look upon me as a leader in this district."

"I see," said Donnimore, who felt irritated with himself that he could not speak with greater warmth.

"It's a few agitators who are determined to make trouble—a few grumbling and dissatisfied idle fellows who can lead the others astray. I've got my eyes skinned, y' know, and I can spot them and their little game, but I'm going to show them who's master here. 'I shall expect you to back me up,' I said to Bentley and Omer yesterday, and they agreed to do so. I can promise the rascals a warm time if there's any of the strike business here."

"I sincerely hope it will not come to that, Mr.

Slayter. For one thing I have no sympathy with strikers. It is such a foolish and futile proceeding, to my mind, and leads to regrettable scenes. I am sure much more can be done by argument and mutual concessions."

Slayter beamed. "I'm very glad, indeed, Donni-more, to hear you hold such sensible views. You're quite right, and I'm very glad indeed to think I shall have your support. You see, you can do such a lot in your position to show your flock what's right and proper. To tell the truth, it's a few confounded Dissenters that are at the bottom of this business. I don't say in every case, mind, but as a rule the Dissenters' local preachers are a discontented lot, and do their best to make everybody else discontented. They're a grumbling and dissatisfied crew, who think because they stand up in the pulpit that they are somebody, and they try to show it that way."

"I am afraid, Mr. Slayter, from what I have seen, that Dissent is rather strong here."

"It is, my dear fellow—infernally strong. I wish it wasn't, and we should have a lot more peace. Have another cigar—do. This is really a most interesting and valuable confab—a really profitable conversation."

"Not another now, thank you, Mr. Slayter. In my late parish the Dissenters were a mere handful, a negligible quantity. We had no trouble from them, and I hold, Mr. Slayter, that where the Church and the clergy do their duty with efficiency and earnestness Dissent cannot flourish."

"Well," returned Slayter doubtfully, "there is something in that view certainly. I won't say that the parsons we've had here have killed themselves with sweating too much, but all the same they're a rum lot up here, you'll find. You see, every chap up here has got the notion that he's as good as everybody else, and so he thinks he knows as much about religion as the parsons, and takes a pride in going contrary to his betters in religious matters. You won't knock that notion out of 'em until you've knocked it out of 'em that they aren't so infernally clever as they think themselves. The chaps about here have got the notion that the man that's down has got as many brains as the man that's up! It's the biggest rot, of course; but there it is. Now, take my own case. I started life as poor as any man, and so did Bentley and a score of others I could find you on the Exchange in Manchester. What took us up? Brains and hard work. What's kept the rest down? Thinking they've got a sight more brains than they have got, and it's that that makes 'em discontented and agitators and Dissenters."

"I don't want you to misunderstand me, Mr. Slayter," put in Donnimore, who had already developed a distaste to agreeing with Mr. Slayter. "I know there are some good Dissenters, and I have nothing against them individually, but the Church must assert herself more—that is the crying need—and I hope we shall be able to make her supreme here in Minvale."

"Quite right, quite right, my dear fellow. I agree

with you. Poor old Bream was a nice sort of chap, you know—never gave any trouble; but he was too easy-going altogether. Old, you know, and had no go in him. I said to Westgate—the patron, you know—that we wanted a young, go-ahead man, but one not at all flighty in his views and not faddy. I'm glad I was able to impress him so well. You see, Donnimore, we've got two or three kinds of Dissenters here—Wesleyans, Primitives—Ranters, I prefer to call them—and Independents. The Ranters are fewest in number, but they can *rant*, I can tell you. Then we've got one or two Plymouth Brothers—Plymouth Canters, I call 'em," with a laugh. "We should have the Salvation Army next, I suppose; but I'll take good care they don't get a building—their row would be the last straw. You'd never have thought we'd got so many sects in Minvale, but it's their confounded impudence, do you see. Church, where there's a parson over them, and respectable men for churchwardens, won't do for them. They want a place of their own, where the minister is something like themselves and they can be their own deacons, or whatever they call 'em."

"Minvale ought to be a worshipping community with so many sects to choose from," remarked Donnimore, who felt he must say something.

"And it isn't. Too many cooks spoil the broth, don't you know, old fellow. It's anything but as pious as it ought to be, and it's this spirit that's abroad that is at the bottom of it. However, I don't mean to stand any nonsense with 'em; they'll

find me a pretty hard nut to crack. If they are going to play any of their hanky-panky tricks they'll find me ready, and it will be a fight to a finish. I'll break 'em down or my name isn't Slayter."

"I hope there will be no battle, Mr. Slayter," said Donnimore soberly. "The Gospel I have come to Minvale to preach is the Gospel of Peace and Joy, and strife will not advance my Master's cause."

"No, you are quite right, Donnimore. I feel sure you will point out these things to Minvale. Come, we'll go into the drawing-room, and you can talk to Mabel, or she'll sing to you. She can sing and play as well as anybody hereabouts—in fact, she had the best teacher in Manchester."

"I'm afraid I can't stay, Mr. Slayter. I want to look in at the choir practice. I like to know all the members of the choir."

"Just so, just so; very proper. Well, Donnimore, if you must go, remember that you will be welcome at any time you care to look in, which I hope will be often. You've given me very great pleasure by your way of looking at things. I won't say that I wasn't a bit afraid that we might not get a parson of the right sort here, but Westgate was ready to listen to a man who knew the needs of the place," and Mr. Slayter saw his guest to the door and effusively shook hands with him.

CHAPTER IV

THE MIND OF HIS SERVANTS

THE next evening several of Mr. Slayter's "hands" had met at the house of Matthew Lemmer, who was one of his master's pet aversions—a Primitive Methodist, a local preacher, a class-leader, and one of those agitators who were so inconsiderate as to disturb the master's peace. There were six present, and the meeting had been called to talk over the state of affairs, which to those present was intolerable. There was no doubt that trade was improving, and yet in spite of Mr. Slayter's promises they were still receiving the same rate of wages as in the hard times of the previous year. On two occasions deputations had met him, but he brusquely told them that the state of trade did not justify the return of wages to the old level, though they well knew that wages had gone up elsewhere.

"Ah've said many a time," remarked Bricknoll, a grim-mouthed man of fifty, "that we owt to have joined the union long years sin'—all of us."

"What's the good o' talkin'?" put in Brinton, a tall, lanky man of about thirty-five. "Yo' known as well as me that he threatened to sack every man as joins the union. If yo' could get most to join,

all well and good, but if a two-three of us joined we should be bagged straightaway."

"It's time summat were done," said Josiah Plee, a young man employed in Mr. Slayter's print works, and another of the rascally local preachers. "Ah've bin in two minds lately about goin' to America, but th' missis conna bring her mind to startin' in another country. And Ah've got a sort o' feelin' as Ah owt to stop and see it out. There's a lot worse off than me, Ah know."

"Ay, lad, stop and see it out," said Matthew Lemmer. "Nayther thy duty nor mine's done when we've stood in th' pulpit; we mun try and mek things temporal better as well. If yo' dunna mind, lads, we'll get down on our knees and ask for guidance, and then go and see th' mester once moor. P'raps he'll listen to reason."

"Ah didna come to any prayer-meetin'," said Bob Slaithwaite, "and Ah amna goin' to use any soft soap to owd Sam. If we conna get our reets we owt to mek 'em. If yo'd any proper spirit in yo' yo'd join me in showin' th' owd mon what's what. But yo' havena, that's the long and short o' it. There's a lot too much religion about this business to please me. So good-neet," and he went out.

For a moment or two there was silence, and then Bricknoll spoke, after glancing round the room. "Ah reckon Ah agree wi' Bob, Matthew. There's no doubt th' owd fox has got us in his hands gradely. How many of us are there as dunna live in one o' Slayter's houses? Unless we can get everybody in

th' same mind he'll turn us out of our houses, and wheer are we then? Ah wish th' owd rogue were dead, that Ah do. That lad of his in th' army 'ould mek a better master."

"It's no good feightin', Sam, unless we get everybody of one mind," said Joe Brinton. "We mun start this business by gettin' everybody to stand up for their reets. But," looking at Lemmer, "if tha wants to pray o'er it, Matthew, Ah for one dunna mind. It winna do much good, Ah'm feart, but it conna do any harm, and Ah know tha'll feel all the better for it, owd man."

Without a word Matthew Lemmer got on his knees. Plee followed him, but the others remained seated. He prayed that they might be guided aright, and that they might have some influence on their master, who was treating them unfairly.

"And now, lads," said Lemmer, when he arose, "what shall be done? There's a good many lookin' for us to do summat, but they dunna know what. Ah'm agen goin' to extremities if there's an easier road. Ah've bin in one strike, and Ah dunna want ever to be in another, if it can be helped. It hurts above a bit to see th' women and childer wi' empty bellies."

"They arena over and above full now," said Bricknoll, with a grim laugh.

"No, they arena, but they arena altogether empty. Is it yo'r will, lads, that we go to th' mester and reason with him? If he winna listen we mun try some other road, Ah reckon."

"We conna do owt else as Ah can see," said

Brinton ; “ none at present, at any rate. But you can mek yo’r minds easy about one thing—owd Sam isna goin’ to listen to reason. He thinks he’s gotten us under his thumb, and he means us to stop theer. From what Ah’ve been towd he’s gettin’ this young parson on his side, as yo’ meight expect. Church folk, Ah reckon, will hear moor than one sermon about doin’ as Sam wants ’em. Well, Ah shanna be theer to hear him.”

It was finally agreed that the next evening Lemmer, Bricknoll, Brinton, Plee, Boothroyd, and Slaithwaite, if he would go, should have an interview with Mr. Slayter.

Friday evening came, and the five—Slaithwaite having refused to accompany them—went to their master’s house, and, with the humility of men who had come to seek favours, sought admission at the kitchen door.

Mr. Slayter had neither butler nor footman, for it was his boast that he was a plain man who lived in a plain way, and a maid took in the message.

“ Just say,” said Matthew Lemmer, “ that it’s five men from th’ Works that want to have a word wi’ him if he’ll be so kind. If yo’ conna remember all our names, say mine is Lemmer—Matthew Lemmer.”

Father and daughter were in Mrs. Slayter’s room when the message was delivered. His face flushed with annoyance. “ Oh, very well, Lizzie,” he said to the maid ; “ let them wait a little. I’ll ring for you when I’ve decided.”

"Just what I expected," he began, when the maid was out of hearing. "I can see through their little game, the canting humbugs. I am going to show them who's master. I am not going to see them now, but they shall kick their heels outside a bit."

"I would send them away at once, then, Samuel," Mrs. Slayter ventured to interpose.

"My-dear, don't you go worrying yourself. I know how to deal with them. They're the sort if you give them an inch they'd take a mile. They'd go back and say how they'd made me see them. No, I'm going to be master."

Nevertheless, they were not kicking their heels outside the kitchen door. Lizzie, who had some instincts of courtesy, had asked them into the kitchen, and had assured them that master was particularly engaged just then, and didn't know yet whether he would be able to see them.

Ten minutes later the bell rang, and Lizzie soon returned with her master's reply. "Master is very sorry, but he is engaged and can't see you to-night. Please come agen on Monday, at eight o'clock." The regrets were a gloss of her own.

Lemmer thanked her, and wished her good night. The rest did not speak until they were free of the house.

"What dost' mek o' that, Matthew?" asked Bricknoll, with another grim laugh. "Ah dunna believe he were engaged; it were only to show us who he thinks he is."

"He meight be engaged," said Lemmer mildly.

"At any rate, he's promised to see us o' Monday. We winna ca' out afore we're hurt, Tom."

"By gum!" said Brinton, "when Ah were in yonder Ah couldna help wonderin' if it were reet that one man should be so rich and hundreds that mek his brass for him poor. Ah'm beginnin' to think them Socialists have got summat to say for theirselves."

"But not to much good," remarked Lemmer very curtly, who connected Socialism with infidelity, and had no tolerance for the creed.

"And yet thy Mester were th' biggest Socialist as trod this earth, Matthew. Moost o' Socialism coom from Him. Ah'm beginnin' to think from what Ah've been readin' lately that if one hawf o' what He teachd were carried out it 'ould be a different wo'ld."

"Ah know," rejoined Lemmer, "that Jesus Christ were a Socialist in one sense. But, Joe, my lad, the gospel He preached was the gospel of love, and th' chap tha's been listenin' to teaches th' gospel of hate. If th' mester were a Christian we shouldna need to ha' been comin' here to get our reets."

"Reets, Matthew? Ah mun say it surprises me that some o' yo' Christians ever trouble about folks' reets. The worst thing Ah see about thorough-goin' Christians is believin' in allus bein' humble and turnin' t'other cheek. Yo'd never mek a Christian o' me, for Ah believe in gettin' me own back as well as Ah can and as quick as Ah can."

Matthew Lemmer's eyes flashed for a moment. "If it hadna bin for Christ and His followers, lad,

tha'd ha' bin havin' a good deal fewer reets at this very minit. It's Christians who have fowt all th' battles for freedom as ha' bin fowt. We Christians believe in feightin' agen wrong, because it's as bad for th' man as does wrong as for them that are wronged. Dostna tha see, lad, that if the prayers o' some o' us were heard, and the mester becom a Christian, our troubles 'ould be o'er? He'd do the thing as were reet then becos it were reet, none because we made him."

"Mester become a Christian!" cried Brinton derisively. "Whatever art' talkin' about, Matthew? Dostna tha know he's a full-blown Christian already? He goes to church reg'lar and he's a churchwarden, and he's allus talkin' about religion and teetotalism, as well as givin' twenty pound to this thing and t'other. Tha knows as well as Ah do that if he deed to-neet what talk there'd be o' Sunday about another good man gone to his heavenly home, and what a loss to everybody, and how we all owt to try and follow in his steps, not becos we could expect to be as good, bein' workin' chaps; but we owt to try. And 'Safe in the arms of Jesus' or summat o' th' sort on his funeral cards," and Brinton laughed again in derision.

"Hush, me lad," came Lemmer's stern command. "Tha shanna mek fun o' religion in my hearin', lad. Dunna forget tha'll ha' to come to die theesel."

"Ah'm none mekkin' fun o' religion, Matthew," said Brinton, with some earnestness. "Ah know as well as thee it's only sham religion, but it passes for th' genuine article. How th' parsons can bring

themselves to talk that road when some owd rogue dees fair licks me. And yet it doesna! Ah've known thee, Matthew, ever sin' Ah were a lad, and Ah tell thee to thy * face what Ah've said behind thy back many a time, and said no longer ago than last neet in th' Wheatsheaf, that tha'rt one o' th' genuine soort o' Christians that Ah'd trust wi' every hawpenny, if Ah'd ten thousand pound. But there arena many o' thy soort knockin' about, owd mon. At yo'r chapel now Ah should tek a coarse sieve and shake out the biggest lot of 'em by far, and what were left Ah should shake through a finer sieve, and sift that lot, and sift what were left. Ah should have, then, what Ah'd be willin' to ca' Christians. There wouldna be many in th' heap, owd mon."

"Tha'rt talkin' at random, Joe," put in Josiah Plee. "Yo' folk who hanna got any religion are allus sneerin' at them that has, and tha owt to know better."

"Nay, Ah amna, lad. Tha never heard me sneer at Matthew here. Tha never heard me sneer at Tom Wilder and Lucy Dimont and some moor. But Ah dunna think as everybody as calls themselves Christians and go reg'lar to chapel or church are so, tha knows. If Ah did Ah should look on Sam as th' chief Christian in Minvale. His dowter goes round with her basket, and they give a bob here and a hawf-crown theer, and it's Christians they are, Ah reckon. If Ah had a thousand a year

* The y in my, thy, by, and their compounds unless emphatic is pronounced very short mÿ, thÿ, bÿ.

Ah'd be one o' th' biggest Christians in these parts, for Ah've never bin able yet to see anybody starvin' when Ah'd owt in me pocket. If Sam and his fam'ly treated us fair they wouldna need to be givin' away."

"Tha'rt wound up, Joe," said Bricknoll, "like tha allus are when tha gets on religion. Leave religion alone, lad; we're talkin' business."

"It is business, mon. Ah'm o' Matthew's opinion as if everybody were converted there'd be no need o' any o' this to-do. Begin wi' convertin' th' mesters and big nobs, Ah say, and religion'll look so nice to such as me Ah shall be glad to be converted mesel'. But so long as Sam's soort and owd Bentley's soort and two-three moor soorts are reckoned Christians Ah'm keepin' outside churches and chapels."

"Dost' know what Ah'm goin' to do, lad?" said Lemmer suddenly, putting his hand on the speaker's arm.

"No, Matthew; none turn Socialist, art'?"

"Ah'm goin' to pray for thy conversion every day, lad."

"Nay, nay, Matthew," cried Brinton, in a sober tone; "thee save all thy prayin' for Sam and his soort, and thy prayers for me winna be needed. If tha'll only get all th' Christians converted tha'll have no need to pray for such as me."

"Well, it's settled, Ah reckon, as we're goin' agen o' Monday neet?" asked Bricknoll.

"Yes," said Lemmer; "we'll go."

"Well, Ah'll say good neet then," remarked

Bricknoll, as they had come opposite the Wheatsheaf Inn.

"Ah'll go wi' thee," said Brinton. "Good neet, yo' two."

"Ah thowt o' askin' thee, Joe, to come whoam wi' me to read a chapter together," said Lemmer, with a wistful smile.

Brinton smiled, but shook his head. "None to-neet, owd mon ; go and read a chapter to Sam."

"Eh, lad," said Brinton to his companion, when the others had walked on, "Matthew's a good soort. There's a lot to be said for religion when it meks such men as him."

"Ay, but it often meks the cantin' soort. Ah conna stand mesel' them as are down on a bit o' enjoyment. Matthew and Josh Plee looks on thee and me as no better than we should be, becos we're steppin' in here for a glass."

"Ay, Ah know. We're beggars for havin' a bit o' enjoyment, arena we ? But did tha ever think if it werena for a glass here and a glass theer th' women 'ould have a bit moor to spend a' whoam ? Nance said to me no longer ago than this week that Ah should kick up a hullaballoo if hoo went spendin' four or five bob a week on porter to keep up her strength. Ah laughed and said hoo could be very well sure Ah should mek a big noise. Ah said Ah didna spend hawf that. 'Yea, tha does,' hoo ses. 'Nay, Ah dunna,' Ah said, and Ah were gettin' raggy. 'Well, lad, we'll just reckon up honest,' hoo ses. Well, we reckoned up, and, by gum ! it come to three-and-thrippence, and there

were Sat'day to come. And Ah reckon thee and me thowt ourselves next door to tee-tees."

"Of course, Joe, if tha looks on it her road——"

"Ah did for once, dost' see, and between thee and me, Ah dunna wonder at th' women jawin' sometimes. But there's one good thing about a sup o' drink, as Ah tow'd Nance; it meks a man forget for a minit or two. Just a glass or two and there's nowt troubles me."

CHAPTER V

ORGANISATION

ON the Monday evening the five delegates were again seeking admittance to their master's presence. After keeping them waiting for a quarter of an hour he gave orders for them to be shown into his library, where he was awaiting them. He did not ask them to sit down, but from across the table opened the interview. "You know," he said, in his most magisterial tone, "this sort of thing won't do. I won't be bothered by anybody after hours. If you want to see me about business, see me at the Works in future."

"We couldna see you together at th' Works, sir," said Matthew Lemmer, "for me and Josiah here couldna come from th' bleach-works and Joe from th' yard."

"Well, what is it? No more complaints, I hope, or you'd better go at once."

"It isna complaints, sir," rejoined Lemmer. "We just want to have a talk with yo' about things face to face. Yo' known, sir, as things arena as they should be in Minvale. Folks are worse off than Ah've known 'em for many a long year."

"Well, what of that?" asked Slayter. "Haven't I told you all that trade's bad—deuced bad?"

"Ah, but it's better than it were, sir, and yo' promised us as soon as it got better our wages should go up to th' owd level. It isna any worse with yo', sir, than t'other mesters. Wages are a good deal worse here than in Stopport [Stockport] and other places. Yo' arena doin' worse than t'other mesters, sir; and beside, a promise is a promise."

"I pay enough for the work that's done, Lemmer—in fact, too much. I'm not going to be bullied, mark you; I've made up my mind for that."

"Yo' took ten per cent. off our wages when most of th' other mesters took off nowt, sir, and you promised th' wages should go back directly trade mended a bit. It isna fair treatment, sir, and it's just made the difference in many a score of homes, has that ten per cent. If yo'll only think, sir, that your extry profit means that scores o' your hands havena enough to ate and clothe their backs decent yo'll be reasonable, sir."

Mr. Slayter flushed. "Now, look here, you, Lemmer, and all of you! I'm not going to be bullied. If you aren't satisfied, go and find work elsewhere. I'm glad for one thing that you've come to-night, for I can see now who you are that's trying to make mischief. I shall keep an eye on you, I promise you; and if you try to play your tricks with me, off you'll go, double quick. If there's any grumbling it's you that have made it, and I'm not going to stand it, I can assure you. If you like to give notice you can do it now."

“Well, sir, if that’s your last word Ah’m sorry, and we’re all sorry,” said Lemmer firmly. “Ah were hopin’ yo’d meet us in a fair spirit. It’s none so much th’ money as feelin’ yo’ are bein’ put on and none treated fairly as will breed trouble, sir.”

Slayter made no reply, but rang the bell. “Show these men out,” he said, and they went out without a word. He laughed, well pleased with himself, when they were gone. “I guessed that old humbug was at the bottom of it,” he said to himself; “but he’ll not come canting over me.”

“Well, Matthew,” said Brinton, with a laugh, as he saw the old man’s sorrowful face, “thy prayin’s none done much good wi’ th’ owd rogue. After all, Ah conna help but admire him a bit. If we’d stuck up for our reets like he sticks up agen us we should be a bit better off, Ah reckon. What’s to be done, Matthew?”

“We mun get to work quiet, lads, and form a union,” said Lemmer. “Look here, my lads, this is a serious business, and we munna have hot yeads. If we are to get our reets we mun go to work quiet, but we mun work hard.”

“Ah reckon,” said Bricknoll slowly, “that that’s all we can do at present, but Ah feel like feightin’ now. Ah’ll bet Sam’s crowin’ this very minit.”

“Ah feel like feightin’ too,” said Brinton. “Ah felt like feightin’ in Sam’s yonder. But Matthew’s reet; yo’ conna win battles by runnin’ wi’ your yead at a mon that’s got a rifle wi’ a bayonet at th’ end. It doesna agree wi’ young blood very well,

Ah know, but, all th' same, it's none th' best way to use yo'r yead. Matthew's reet; we mun go quiet among th' chaps and get 'em to see that th' only way is to feight all together, and all be o' one mind. Ah've said many a time as th' worst mesters are them that's bin workin' chaps theirsels. Come and have a drink, Tom; we shall find two-three chaps in th' Wheatsheaf, Ah reckon, and we can begin work straightaway."

Lemmer shook his head, hesitated, and then spoke. "Ah do wish, lads, yo'd learn to see that drink is one o' th' best friends th' mesters have. It's allus feightin' on their side."

"Ah dunna doubt tha'rt reet, Matthew," said Brinton, "but Ah can tell thee a better friend to th' mesters. Churches and chapels, owd mon! Yo' worship th' mon that's got th' brass, as Ah tow'd thee afore. Up at th' church Sam's th' biggest mon they've got, because he planks down a sovereign—our money too, mind—while other folks have all they can do to raise a penny. And who's th' big mon at Josh's place? Why, Bentley—as big a rogue nearly as Sam. Ah've heared as when childer in th' Sunday schoo' falls on their knees they think it's Bentley they're worshipping'."

"Tha owt to be ashamed——" began Josiah Plee hotly, but Matthew laid his hand heavily on the young man's shoulder, who swallowed, and with difficulty kept silence. With a cordial "Good neet" from Lemmer they separated.

"Dunna let Joe upset thee, lad," said Lemmer, as he walked along with Plee.

"It's moor than flesh and blood can stand sometimes," returned the young man.

"Ah know how tha feels, lad, but Joe doesna mean all he ses, dost' see, and another thing is, it's as well we're made to see things wi' other folks' eyes. Th' worst of it is, so much of it's true. We *are* given to worshippin' th' rich in our places of worship."

"Ah amna," retorted Plee, who was still hot.

"No, but some of us are, Ah'm feart, and it's that that meks Joe's words sting a bit. Well, lad, dunna trouble about that; we've summat afore us th' next six months, if th' mester isna moor reasonable. Ah'm agen war, and Ah dunna know in my heart if a strike's much better, and that's what is comin'. Tha's never bin in a strike, lad. It's easy to talk about bringin' folks to reason, but in a strike, like in a war, th' devvle's let loose and he gets a fine innin's."

"Wi' such a mon as thee in it, Matthew, Ah'm none feart."

"When th' devvle's out o' his cage, lad, he goes about like a roarin' lion, and folks winna listen to reason," and Lemmer shook his head sadly. "Ah were readin' as an American general said war were hell. He were reet, lad, and a strike's a little war. And the women and childer, lad! Ah've seen things, lad, that'd mek thee wish tha'd never been born, in a strike at Stopport. Women clemmed, lad, till there were nowt at th' breast for new-born babes, and men driven mad to see their loved ones dyin' by inches. Eh, lad!"

Plee looked at the elder man curiously. "Art' weakenin', Matthew?" he asked anxiously.

Lemmer smiled. "Dunna be feart, lad. Becos Ah count th' cost afore Ah begin, it doesna mean Ah amna willin' to pay. But Ah thowt Ah'd show thee there'll be brokken hearts afore th' job's o'er. Pray, lad, without ceasin', to th' Lord to soften th' mester's heart and give peace in our time. Good neet, lad," with an affectionate touch on the young man's shoulder.

Meanwhile, Brinton and Bricknoll in the Wheat-sheaf were telling a few of their friends how insolent and unyielding Slayter had been, and that the time had come to adopt other methods. They had decided to form a union at once, as secretly and quietly as possible.

"Ah'll tell thee what it is, Joe," said Abram Shinding, a man of forty-five, with sandy countenance, small eyes, and a most unsatisfied mouth. "There's too many Methodies and that soort in this business to please me, mon. Bob Slaithwaite tow'd me as owd Lemmer wanted to have a prayer-meetin' o'er it, but Bob wouldna stop."

"That's reet," said Brinton, with composure.

"Were thee theer at it?"

Brinton nodded.

"A nice mon, thee, for a prayer-meetin'!"

"Tha meight reckon it rare and dangerous, Abram, but Ah didna tek any harm," returned Brinton, completely unruffled. "Ah reckon tha's never bin at a prayer-meetin', lad, and tha's gotten a wrong idea about 'em. Yo' just get on yo'r knees and

somebody prays. Or yo' can stand up or sit down if yo' like. Ah felt just th' same at th' end as at th' beginnin', but Ah know it did two-three a lot o' good."

Shinding grunted disgustedly. "It's what Ah said——"

"Tha doesna know everythin', Abram, lad. Dost' see, when *tha* wants to do owt uncommon—and generally when tha doesna, as well—tha has a pint, or maybe a sup o' Scotch. Well, Matthew and a lot moor fancy they can do a thunderin' seet [sight] moor on prayer. It puts heart in 'em, and Ah tell thee one thing, lad; for them as believes in it a prayer does moor than all th' ale and whisky tha ever drunk. Becos tha doesna pray, dunna mek leet [light] of it, lad. Tha can mek up thee mind to one thing: Matthew and his soort'll go through with it. Ah've seen it afore to-day."

"Ah conna stand th' cantin', long-faced soort mesel'," rejoined Shinding, who felt he was having the worst of the argument. "Ah reckon owd Lemmer thinks thee and me are very near hell becos we're sittin' here havin' a sup of ale."

"Ah dunna know about that, lad, but he thinks we're spendin' money that's wanted badly a'whoam. So does my missis, and Ah reckon thine does, too."

"Oh, ay, women mun mouth about summat. But Ah conna stand th' canters, and that's a fact."

"Well, what art thee doin', lad? If tha doesna like 'em, why doesna thee buckle to and do some o' th' work theesel'?"

Shinding coughed. "Well, dost' see, Ah dunna

care to be mixed up wi' that lot Ah'm talkin' about."

Brinton looked at him with a mouth slightly awry. "Look here, Abram, lad, tha'rt one o' th' best chaps Ah know for standin' wi' thy hands in thy pockets and findin' fault wi' them that's got theirs out. To tell thee th' truth, lad, we've no use in this business for a chap whose hands are so cowed he has to keep 'em in his pockets. Thee never mind about prayer-meetin's, lad, but just attend a work meetin' or two."

The others had listened to the discussion with smiling faces. Brinton had impressed his personality on his mates, and what he advocated they were always inclined to adopt without question. Before he entered they had agreed with Shinding that nothing was to be hoped from a movement in which "Methodies" were taking a leading part. In "Methodies" was included "psalm-singers" and "canting humbugs" of every denomination.

Shinding had no reply ready, and Brinton resumed: "Well, lads, Ah'm dependin' on all o' yo' here. It'll none be an easy job to get th' better o' Sam and his side, and we shall need all th' help we can get—prayin' soort and cursin' soort will be wanted, yo'll find. He's given us a back answer to-neet; well, if we've got sense and pluck enough to work together we'll give him a backer answer afore long."

"Ah hope tha tow'd him straight and plain to-neet, Joe," remarked Shackdale.

"Matthew did th' talkin', and did it well. But

it werena th' reet time to shove yo'r fist in his face. Tom, here, felt like feightin', and so did Josh Plee."

"Ah feel so still," interposed Bricknoll.

"Ah know tha does, mon. My yead used to be as hot as thine," at which there was laughter, seeing that Bricknoll was some sixteen years older. "It's all very well to go like a bull at a gate, but we're all in this business, and yo' have to think o' other folks. Get yo'r army together and then feight is th' way o' business. Yo'll all join, lads?"

"Ay, we'll join reet enough," said Shackdale.

"And thee, Abram?" asked Brinton.

"Oh, of course Ah'm in," returned Shinding.
"Ah only——"

"Then Ah'll have in hawf a gallon to celebrate th' occasion. We'll drink to th' success o' th' cause. By gum, lads! only work together and Minvale meight be worth livin' in."

CHAPTER VI

DEVOTED TO A SERMON

THE new vicar was not altogether pleased with his flock, as he confided to Adamson, who heard him with misgiving. He did not care for Slayter, he explained, and it was not agreeable to find himself of the same opinion as that man of the overbearing manner, but there was certainly a spirit of unrest and discontent in the parish that would breed greater evils if it were not checked. Donnimore spoke with full assurance ; he had no doubts on the matter. Adamson said little ; he knew Minvale, and had his own opinions on the matter, and he earnestly hoped that Donnimore would not destroy his usefulness by a fatal lack of sympathy with his flock in their trials and difficulties.

The following Sunday evening Donnimore preached a sermon in which he plainly told his parish the truth, as he conceived it. Some foolish individuals, with a recklessness that deserved the strongest reprobation, he said, were talking about a strike, as though it were the simplest thing in the world to strike. He begged all present to have nothing to do with these windy, empty-headed agitators, who in malicious wantonness were anxious

to put class against class. A strike was a foolish and, he was sorry to say, often a criminal proceeding. Undoubtedly it led to crime, and brought nothing but misery to those who were duped into striking. It would stir up evil passions that it would take years to allay, and no Christian could take a course that would rouse the baser passions of his fellows. No, he said in a warm outburst, if they fancied they had grievances, discuss them sensibly, but he implored them not to be led away into the fool-fury of a strike.

Slayter slipped out of his seat and round to the vestry door to await Donnimore. His countenance was beaming as he took the clergyman's hand and shook it effusively. "I must thank you for the A 1, the splendid, practical sermon you preached to-night, my dear fellow. I felt ready to applaud as I listened. It was one of the best sermons I ever listened to."

"I am glad it pleased you," returned Donnimore, without warmth.

"Pleased? Pleased, my dear fellow, isn't the word. It was simply ripping—a splendid effort. Just what was needed. There were plenty of heads the cap would fit I could see on looking round, and I only wished the Dissenters could have heard it. The cap would have fitted their heads to a T."

"I must confess that Dissent, as I have found it, seems to beget a habit of mind that is dissatisfied with the established orders of things," said Donnimore. "It is only natural that it should."

"It does, Donnimore, but I couldn't have put

it as well as that. Look here, you are coming with me to supper to-night. My wife and daughter will be disappointed if you do not turn up."

Donnimore hesitated for a second or two. "Thank you, I have been neglecting Mrs. Slayter lately," he said, but in his own mind he knew that it was the thought of Mabel Slayter that made him accept the invitation. His distaste of Slayter did not include his wife and daughter. Mabel Slayter, as he had already confessed to himself, he admired. She was bright and vivacious and, if he was not mistaken, had some of her mother's goodness of heart.

They overtook Mabel outside the church gates. She complimented him on his sermon, but until they reached the house she had no opportunity to speak again. Mr. Slayter was so elated with the discourse that he took the conversation in charge, and discoursed at length on the perverse and thankless generation that abode in Minvale, and the buffet the sermon would be to them. When they reached the house he took the vicar impetuously to his wife's room and entered like a tempest. Mrs. Slayter was reading a book of devotion, and Donnimore could see that this was an unwelcome break on her peace and calm.

"My dear," began Slayter, "you missed an A1 treat to-night—a very splendid discourse; I wish you could have heard it. Donnimore here preached one of the best sermons I've listened to for a long time. Rubbed it into the grumblers and would-be strikers in fine style. Showed 'em how un-Christian

they were, and all that. They had it hot and good to-night, I can assure you. My only regret is that the Dissenters were not there to hear it."

Donnimore winced slightly. "I thought it my duty, Mrs. Slayter; do you see," he said rather coldly, "to try to prevent the peace of the parish being broken."

"It was a stirring sermon," said Slayter, smoothing the lower folds of his waistcoat and stroking himself down complacently. "I wish you had been there to hear it, my dear."

"I am sorry I cannot be there every Sunday," returned Mrs. Slayter gently. "I am very sorry the poor folks think they have grievances so great as to make them contemplate striking."

"Come, come, my dear!" said Slayter with a slight smile of irritation, as though he were addressing a favoured and petulant child. "You see, Donnimore, she has to keep to her room, and she gets some extraordinary notions at times."

"I hope I sympathise with all my flock, Mrs. Slayter," said Donnimore, "but I felt it my duty to speak out to a few who are leading the others astray—or trying to. I hope what I said will prevent the peace of the parish being broken."

"They are as miserable and ungrateful a set of people as you could find anywhere," put in Mabel. "I don't think some of them know the meaning of the word 'gratitude.' They take what you have to give almost without thanks, and insult you behind your back."

Mrs. Slayter smiled. "Well, my dear, don't

let us discuss the faults of our neighbours to-night," she said gently. "I prefer to think about my own on a Sunday evening."

Slayter turned on the vicar with a gesture that expressed his helplessness to argue with a woman who had kept her room so long that she had become impracticable. "We'll go down to supper, my dear," he said. "Anything you particularly fancy to-night?"

"No, thank you, Sam," was her reply.

"I am coming to call on you to-morrow afternoon, Mrs. Slayter," said Donnimore. "Although you are confined to your room you will have to assist me in parish work; I know you can give me valuable advice. I wish you good night."

"I don't complain—I never do complain, Donnimore," said the host as they went downstairs together, "but I often wish my wife was able to take her part in the world. A man is handicapped all the time, as things are. Of course, Mab is a good girl and a useful girl, but she is young, and somebody will want to snap her up before long—some man will want to lead her to the altar."

"For selfish reasons," said Donnimore, "I wish Mrs. Slayter was strong and well. I can see what assistance she would be in parochial work."

"She would that. Well, well, we mustn't complain, I suppose," and Slayter heaved a sigh of resignation.

A man was pacing the road outside The Hollies, anxious to have a word with the vicar when he

came out. He let Donnimore walk on a little way and then overtook him. "Fine neet, sir," he said.

"Oh, you, is it, Ingham?" he said, recognising one of the bassos of the church choir.

"Yes, sir, Ah've bin waitin' outside a bit, for Ah felt Ah couldna rest till Ah'd had two-three words with yo' about that sermon. It's been stickin' in me throat ever since, sir."

"Indeed, Ingham." Donnimore's tone became icy on the instant.

"Look here, sir, Ah want to talk to yo' friendly as a good Churchman. Ah know yo' are friendly with owd Slayter, but they arena all mesters that come to church. A good many of us are workin' folk, and we've got our reets as much as th' mester. Yo' tow'd us our duty to-neet. Are we goin' to have another sermon next Sunday to th' mesters tellin' them *their* duty, which is to treat us decent—like men, not slaves?"

"I'm sorry to hear this from you, Ingham," said Donnimore, with sorrowful dignity.

"Ah thowt—at least, Ah were afraid yo' would be, sir. Well, all Ah can say is *Ah'm* sorry, very sorry. Ah did hope, when Ah looked at yo' and spoke to yo', as yo' were one o' th' parsons, sir, as didna truckle to th' rich any moor than yo'r Mester did."

"I don't truckle to anything or anybody, Ingham, and I don't like your tone, my good fellow."

"Well, Ah didna like yo'r sermon, sir, and so we're quits so far."

"I am sorry the sermon displeased you, Ingham, but I simply said to-night what my duty demanded."

"Then yo've got howd o' th' wrong end o' th' stick, sir. Yo' teach Sam Slayter and two-three moor like him their duty, sir, and we shall do ours. It's plain yo' dunna know th' facts o' th' matter."

"I'm sorry to find, Ingham, that you are one of the agitators."

"Ah'm no agitator unless it means a man that's got pluck enough to stand up for his reets. Ah'm moor sorry than Ah can tell yo', sir; this is enough to mek a good many of us Dissenters."

"Good night, Ingham," said Donnimore coldly, and walked on. The encounter had disturbed him. He knew very little about Ingham save that he was a member of the choir and taught in the Sunday school. Certainly he had not expected to find him one of the agitators.

The next day the sermon was discussed in all the workshops during the dinner hour.

"Sam's got howd o' him," said an elderly man named Blackrod. "Well, Ah for one never expected owt else."

"Did tha hear it?" asked Brinton.

"No."

"Nayther did Ah," said Brinton. "It's a plain proof to him, dost' see, as we're a bad lot when nearly all us that are in it to our necks ayther dunna go nowheer or are Methodies. Well, it doesna trouble me one atom. Ah didna expect any parsons on our side, and, by gum! Ah want

none—only Ah should like to have two-three words wi' th' young feller."

"Bill Ingham let him have it, last neet. He tow'd him he owt to preach to th' mesters."

"What did th' parson say?"

"Nowt much. He reckoned he felt sorry for Bill. Bill tow'd him he felt sorry for *him*."

"Ah once," Brinton said, cutting up some thick twist—"Ah once axed owd Lemmer a riddle about paid preachers. Ah forget how it went now, but Ah tow'd him th' answer were they never practised what they said. Ah dunna say they're all like that, but moost on 'em are. Well, we know now that th' parsons are agen us, as we meight have known from th' first. Ah'm glad Ingham spoke up to him."

"Ah never knowed any good come from th' parsons yet," said Slaithwaite. "They live on chaps like us, and that's all they care about."

"They dunna live on me, lad," retorted Brinton, "and this young chap 'ould show his ribs moor if he had to depend on what he got from thee. Ah'm sorry for his sake, for he's a nice-lookin' young chap, and a first-class cricketer, they tell me."

"About all he's fit for," growled Brinton's interlocutor.

"Well, never mind," said Brinton. "We have to depend on oursels, and it's no odds to me if all th' parsons in England are agen us. If we howd together like men, Ah'm none feart. But we shall have to howd together, mind."

"Ah dunna believe in owd Lemmer—and some

moor o' th' same soort havin' so much to do with it."

"Theer tha goes!" said Brinton, pointing with his pipe. "Ah just said we mun all howd together, and tha'd turn some out. We want all soorts, lad, if we mun mek a feight of it. Theer's one thing Ah can tell thee about owd Lemmer; he never ses owt about none havin' any o' th' sinners in th' job. He knows that it'll tek saints and sinners to get our road with Sam and his soort. Tha can be sure th' mesters will howd together. If we keep out anybody we're done afore we start."

CHAPTER VII

THE ROSE OF LIFE

THE next day, which was fine and hot, but with a refreshing breeze from the south-west, Donnimore and Adamson took Mabel Slayter on the promised excursion over the Peak. They took the left side of the mountain by a path which followed the windings of an impetuous burn, intending to lunch at the Snake Inn and then return by way of Glossop. Donnimore and Miss Slayter especially were in the liveliest spirits, and stopped often to express their raptures at the magnificent scenery; but Adamson felt his observation must be at fault if Donnimore would not have found the streets of Minvale charming if Mabel Slayter were at his side. Again and again he caught the young man watching her intently, and he felt that if he could have quietly vanished he would hardly have been missed. Adamson had some misgivings; he liked them both greatly, but he knew that beneath Mabel Slayter's laughing manner and careless speech there lay a character in some ways curiously obstinate, and he doubted whether hers and Donnimore's could mix in a perfect whole. It was plain to him on that

excursion that sympathy with each other was fast leading them to deeper feelings.

"There, Mr. Donnimore!" said Mabel, taking off her hat as they rested after a steep ascent, "this is Derbyshire. You have to see Buxton and Matlock and Miller's Dale and Dove Dale yet, and if you do not, after seeing them, fall down and worship the loveliest district in England you are past hope and deserve banishment."

Donnimore took off his hat and spoke in a sober tone. "I am always uplifted among the hills and mountains," he said, and then added, turning to Mabel, "Have no doubts, Miss Slayter; I am in love with it already. It is perfection."

"No, not perfection, Mr. Donnimore," said Mabel, with a frown. "It is difficult to believe that such a blot as Minvale dare rear its ugly head at the foot of the Peak."

"Come, come, my child," said Adamson, "it is too bad to endeavour to prejudice Donnimore against his parish. You must recollect that your living, and that of scores of others, comes from the grime of Minvale. As I have told you before, you want the practical eye."

"It is hideous, nothing less, Mr. Adamson, as you well know, and its people are hateful," she returned, with emphasis. "I sometimes wonder if they could be otherwise, living in such a detestable blot on a lovely landscape. I'm not satisfied whether it is the people that make Minvale what it is, or Minvale that makes the people what they are, but it is beyond question that its people are

dirty and horrid and vulgar. Don't you think so, Mr. Donnimore ? ”

“ It is not a place you could fall in love with at a glance,” replied Donnimore cautiously.

“ And the people, Mr. Donnimore ? ”

“ The same answer, Miss Slayter.”

“ Threatening to strike is just what you might expect from them. Dad seems surprised, but I'm not ; they don't know what it is to be grateful.”

“ My dear,” said Adamson in an indulgent tone, “ you don't always mean all you say.”

“ Mr. Adamson,” indignantly, “ I do.”

“ I should be sorry to believe it, my dear. You must cultivate your faculty of sympathy, which is looking at matters with the eyes of other people. I do not doubt that the people of Minvale could make a defence—a good defence. What do you say, Donnimore ? ”

Donnimore looked at Mabel and hesitated, and Adamson smiled to himself. “ I hope they can, Adamson, but I dislike this strike agitation immensely.”

“ My dear young people,” replied Adamson, “ before you become such severe censors of Minvale look out for a few minutes with the eyes of the Minvaleites. I can truthfully say the more I know of the people in this district the more respect and liking I have for them. Taken all in all, theirs is a splendid character. The agitators may be mistaken, but I assure you that from their point of view they have something to say for themselves.”

“ They have too much to say for themselves,”

retorted Mabel. "But there, Mr. Adamson! a discussion of this sort here is an insult to the Peak. Come, Mr. Donnimore, there is more climbing to be done, I think, before we lunch at the Snake. I am afraid the scenery is not as magnificent as I thought it."

"Is that because you are longing for lunch, my dear?" asked Adamson.

"You have guessed rightly, Mr. Adamson. In humiliation I confess I am not all spirit; at this moment I have a most vulgar appetite."

"The Derbyshire air must make the food bill a serious matter to the man of small means," laughed Donnimore. "Like Miss Slayter, I confess to a most carnal appetite at this moment."

They lunched and rested for an hour, and then set their steps homeward. They left Miss Slayter at her own door, and then Donnimore, who said he was not at all tired, proposed walking home with Adamson. The latter made no remark, but smiled to himself as he read his *confrère's* mind.

They walked on a little way in silence before Donnimore remarked, "Miss Slayter, Adamson, is a very unaffected girl."

"Very!" rejoined Adamson.

"I have enjoyed our excursion to-day wonderfully."

"I am glad of that."

"It has puzzled me a little, Adamson, how such a gentle, refined girl could be Mr. Slayter's daughter. She must have inherited her character from her mother."

"Mrs. Slayter," said Adamson, with warmth, "is one of Nature's gentlewomen. There is no woman I have been more glad to know."

"So it struck me, Adamson. I am very glad to hear we are of the same opinion regarding her. You think, then, that Miss Slayter is her mother's child?"

"Yes, I do—save for a touch or two of obstinacy."

"She is a very charming girl, but I think it is the total absence of affectation that appeals to me. How long have you known her, Adamson?"

"Since she was a girl of ten."

Adamson understood his mood. He had passed through the same stage of bliss himself, and he knew that there was nothing so interesting to Donnimore as to talk about the girl who was hourly eating her way into his heart of hearts.

"I suppose," said Donnimore, after a pause, "that we must not be too hard on Mr. Slayter. His lack of a liberal education has evidently been a real misfortune to him."

"His view is very circumscribed," returned Adamson.

"Well, good night, Adamson," said Donnimore, as they reached the vicarage gate. "I won't trespass on you any more this day. It has been a delightful one, and I shall enjoy the walk back."

Adamson saw little of Donnimore in those following glowing weeks, and when they met it was not his parish but the family at The Hollies he was anxious to talk about. The elder man was secretly amused at the cunning with which he would turn

the conversation in that direction, while with the blindness that love induces he thought he was cleverly disguising his purpose. It was really extraordinary to him, when you came to know her more intimately, how greatly Miss Slayter differed from her father, was his chief theme. But then, after all, she was almost entirely her mother's child. Mrs. Slayter impressed him more and more every time he saw her. She had not been coarsened and roughened by contact with her husband. It was very rare that a man of strong and overbearing character, who had no compunction at riding roughshod over weaker men, failed to leave a deep impress on gentle natures such as hers. It was a satisfaction to see that she and not Slayter had made the impress on the daughter.

But still Adamson was not satisfied that Mabel and he would get on together. She was not altogether the mother's; she had a little of her father's obstinate will. To her the "hands" he employed were almost of another race. They were ungrateful creatures, the men fond of drink and with a distaste for work, the women loud-voiced and shiftless slatterns. She visited them and distributed her gifts, but it was only in one or two she took any interest, and no sympathy went with her bounty. Adamson had often smilingly opposed her views, and had hopes that as her youth gave way to womanhood she would have a little of her mother's clearer and surer vision.

Nevertheless, the love-making went on in the way that is so common and so remarkable. To

the lovers it was the most astounding miracle of the universe. They were together as much as possible, and they wanted no one else. Minvale saw it as clearly as the lovers' friends, and all hopes that they had got a parson who would take a human interest in them faded, and bitter and sarcastic were the comments from the doorsteps and the street corners as they saw the twain pass by, almost unconscious that these inferior beings could understand.

One blustering afternoon, when great sheets of rain at intervals blotted out the hills, Donnimore called on Adamson—"to smoke a pipe," he said, whereat the older man smiled. They discussed a few trivial matters—the bishop's pastoral letter, the gloomy foreign outlook, and the misdeeds of the party in power—and then Donnimore came to the thing that mattered.

"You've taken a warm interest in me, Adamson," he said, "and I'm very grateful for it—you have saved me from many errors. In return I'm going to tell you something which is at present a secret, but which I am sure will interest you."

"Well?" said Adamson, when he paused.

He blushed unmistakably. "Well, Adamson, I'm in love."

"My dear fellow," was the answer, "I and all Minvale have known that for some weeks."

He looked at Adamson in genuine astonishment. "What do you mean, Adamson?"

"Donnimore, the only time when human beings are wholly transparent—which is when they are in love—is the very time they imagine they walk

behind a curtain that shuts off the common gaze. You are as transparent as the rest."

The lover looked at his interlocutor again, flushed a deeper hue, then laughed, and said a little embarrassedly, "You surprise me, Adamson."

"Have you proposed yet, Donnimore?"

"I have. I proposed last night."

Adamson rose and held out his hand. "I have no need to say, my dear fellow, that I hope with all my heart your present happiness may continue."

"Thank you, Adamson. In spite of Mabel's kindness to me I was a little doubtful till last night. You look upon me as a man who would dash in anywhere, I know, but to tell the painful truth, old fellow, for ten days I have been trying to reach the point of saying, 'I love you—do you love me?' And it was not till last night I could get so far. I can't tell you what passed, Adamson; it ought to be and is sacred to me, but I am to speak to her father to-night, and I have been wondering all day what I am or what I have done to deserve such happiness. You would tell me it's a beastly day, Adamson, but I shouldn't believe you; everything wears a smiling face."

"I know," said Adamson. "It is all love and laughter and roses, and I'm very glad for your sake, Donnimore. She is a good girl, who, I am sure, will stand by a man when the beastly days come. I shall go over to-morrow and offer my congratulations to her and her parents. To Mrs. Slayter it will give great happiness."

"Thank you, Adamson, with all my heart. But,

remember," and his face clouded a little, "I have to face the father to-night."

"That is nothing, my boy; I am certain you can count on paternal approval."

"He is not in the best of humours though, Adamson; his people are giving him a great deal of trouble. He tells me that in spite of everything he believes they are preparing to strike. I long sometimes for the peace of my rural parish in the south."

"I am afraid, Donnimore, there are some anxious days ahead."

"Of course, I can see as well as you, Adamson, that he has not much tact and his manner is overbearing at times, but he has a very dissatisfied lot of men to deal with. There is poverty in some of the homes without question, and if he made a promise, even if it were a rash one, he ought to perform it; but the wives are thriftless, and there is too much spent on drink—far too much. Slayter tells me that, what with competition and the dormant state of the market, he really cannot afford to pay the present wages."

"What does he mean by affording, Donnimore? Does he mean that he will carry on his works at a loss, or his profits will decrease a little?"

Donnimore waved his hand as if the matter were one of no importance. "I don't know, I'm sure," he said, a trifle impatiently. "I believe from what I've heard that a few Dissenters are at the bottom of the whole agitation."

☛ "Then, from what I know of the type of men,

the fight will be a hard one. You don't regard *them* as improvident and reckless, Donnimore ? ”

“ Oh no, I suppose not. But very dissatisfied and ready to show their hostility to established order of all kinds. I suppose if Slayter had been a Dissenter they would have put up with anything.”

“ There you mistake, old fellow. As a matter of fact, I believe Bentley, who is a prominent Dissenter, is looked upon as no better a master than Slayter, and you may be sure that without concessions the strike will include his mill also. The only difference is that Bentley has not so much power in his hands as Slayter, who owns the houses in which his employés live.”

Donnimore was silenced, but not convinced. “ You have, of course, no sympathy with a strike, Adamson ? ” he asked, a trifle anxiously.

“ I have been through one strike, Donnimore, and, please God, I may never have to look upon another. It was in Bradford, where I was curate, and I saw all the brute in man unchained. But, knowing what I do of the conditions of work in Minvale, I foresee a strike unless there is a little more reason displayed. Donnimore, old fellow, use what influence you have in prevailing upon Slayter to adopt a more sympathetic attitude, or there'll be trouble.”

Donnimore slowly shook his head. “ He would look upon it, I am sure, as yielding to threats. I hope the men will be more reasonable and the trouble averted. I preached strongly on the matter a week or two ago.”

"I know," retorted Adamson, a trifle exasperated. "I heard of that sermon *ad nauseam*. I wish you had preached about anything else, Donnimore; it marked you in the eyes of your flock as blindly and uncompromisingly on the side of the masters. I hate giving advice, my dear fellow, but I know what is possible to you at Minvale, and I say: Fight your way at any cost to the sympathies of your parish. I have watched you, and know you can do it."

Donnimore rose. "I must be going," he said, his voice a little constrained.

"Forgive me, old fellow, if I have pinked you, but I have a great regard for you. However, I can say from my heart I wish you all happiness, and Mabel also. I don't hope your life together may be all roses, or you would soon be utterly weary, but I pray you may only have thorns enough to deepen and exalt your devotion to each other. I shall call at Slayter's to-morrow."

He accompanied his visitor to the door. "God help him!" he said, as he watched him striding vigorously through the rain.

Donnimore did not face the meeting with the father of his beloved without a few qualms. In his heart he had no liking for Samuel Slayter, whom he could not consider a gentleman. Yet when he thought of the mill-lord with distaste he could always console himself with the thought that Mabel was altogether her mother's child; neither in looks nor character could he trace the father. It was unpalatable to him that Slayter and he agreed on

so many questions; nothing but a strong sense of righteousness kept him from arguing the work-people's point of view in the difference that had arisen. He went to the interview firmly resolved that in spite of the close relationship he was about to establish he would not disguise his views or in any sense truckle.

Mr. Slayter was in the library, and Donnimore was taken there. Slayter jumped up when he entered and met him with outstretched hand and beaming face. Donnimore disliked that smile; it was to him the smile of the self-made man who is vain of his handiwork.

"My dear Donnimore, take the chair by the fire there. Unpleasant sort of day, isn't it? Though the rain's needed; the Min was getting uncommonly low. The cigars are on the mantelpiece beside you."

"Thank you, Mr. Slayter," said Donnimore, "I don't think I'll smoke just at present. Do you see, I've come on a matter of business."

"I know, my dear fellow—I know. I've been through it and it makes a fellow sweat, but I'll relieve your anxious mind at once. Do you see, Mab confessed to her mother and me last night what had happened, and I can assure you it gave us great pleasure—very great pleasure. As a matter of fact, I'm not blind, my boy—or I should have been a pound-a-weeker still, I suppose—and I saw what was coming. I told my wife long ago. She couldn't see it. 'My dear,' I said, 'I'll bet you anything you like I'm reet'—I use a bit of Lancashire sometimes, d'ye see, to my wife."

"Then our engagement meets with your approval, Mr. Slayter?"

"My boy, it does. There are some who have said that I was bent on marrying Mabel into one of the county families or to a man of substance. They didn't know me—it's her happiness I'm looking after. If I had felt that way I could, I flatter myself, have allied my family with—with—well, I won't mention names, or I should surprise you."

"I must tell you, Mr. Slayter, I have two hundred and fifty pounds a year in my own right. It was left me by my mother."

"Oh, indeed; glad to hear it, but it doesn't matter in the least. Mabel will not come to you empty-handed, you may be certain."

"I wish you to understand, Mr. Slayter"—and Donnimore spoke with great distinctness—"that is a matter about which I do not concern myself. It is Mabel herself I want, not her fortune."

"Just so, just so, my boy; your sentiments do you credit. Well, we are very pleased indeed—very pleased. With your sound sense, and the advantage that will come to you from your marriage, you will go far, I am confident. I have not heard one of your cloth—one of the clergy—express themselves more practically. You must go and see my wife before you go."

"If you don't mind, Mr. Slayter, I will go now," said Donnimore, anxious to escape. "I shall be very pleased to have Mrs. Slayter's approval from her own lips."

“Just as you like,” said Slayter, with a little disappointment in his tone. “Come, I’ll take you upstairs.”

Mrs. Slayter welcomed him with a few gracious words. “The news has made me very happy, Mr. Donnimore,” she said. “I hope all happiness may be yours. You have my wishes and prayers.” Donnimore took her hand and kissed it. “Then we are fortunate indeed,” he said.

“I am going to dismiss you at once,” responded Mrs. Slayter, with a smile; “Mabel is in the drawing-room, I believe.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRAITOR IN THE CAMP

ONLY lovers can understand what a time of bliss it was for the twain, and they were so absorbed in each other that they passed along the drab streets and roads of Minvale unconscious of an atmosphere of hostility, and of the sneers, malicious comment, and even muttered curses that followed them. To the larger part of Minvale the sight of happiness was almost an insult, especially happiness in connection with "owd Sam," whom it was beginning to hate. Winter was coming, and winter cold on straitened means could not be faced cheerfully. Women who were not good housewives gave up their feeble struggles and allowed things to drift, and men became more reckless in seeking an anodyne in the public-house. The union was making slow but steady progress. The leaders worked unostentatiously but tirelessly, and they gained adherents every day. Some joined, grimly determined to mend the present state of things, some light-heartedly, seeing in a strike relief from the monotony of their daily life, and some out of hatred of Slayter, hoping that a strike would give opportunities for "paying him out." There were, however, as always,

some timid and cautious souls who hated trouble and the disturbance of peace, and were willing to endure anything rather than lose the little they had, and there were a few of mean soul, ready to fawn on the masters and betray their fellow-workers if it would bring any personal advantage. Kings have stood by their kind, great nobles of all ages have never dreamed that one of them would betray his order, capital can count on the loyalty of capital, but the solidarity of labour is as yet only a dream. Labour's greatest enemies have been those of its own household, and again and again has it stretched out hands to grasp the ideal, only to be thrust back by treachery in the camp.

It was after eight one night that Abram Shinding was pacing the road that led to his employer's house. Mr. Slayter had gone to Manchester, and Shinding wanted to speak to him in secret. Mr. Slayter, as an expression of his humble mind, often walked home from the station, dismissing his carriage if it met him. To Shinding's relief he was walking home alone on this occasion.

Shinding stepped from the shelter of a hedge as his master reached him. "Good evenin' sir," he said deferentially, touching his cap. "Yo'll excuse me stopping yo', sir, but Ah wanted to have two-three words with yo', sir."

"What! at this time of night?" demanded Slayter. "You can see me at the mill to-morrow."

"Done yo' see, sir, it wouldna do for me to speak to yo' at the mill—it's secret-like. It wouldna do

for anybody to know Ah'd spokken to yo', sir, but Ah thowt yo'd a reet to know what's goin' on."

"Well, what is it, my man?"

"Ah thowt yo' owt to be tow'd, sir, as some o' th' chaps are gettin' up a union, and when they're strong enough they mean to have a strike at th' works if yo' winna do what they want, sir. They're at it every day, and Ah thowt yo' owt to know."

Mr. Slayter's tone changed instantly to one of cordial approval. "Oh, is that so? you did quite right to come to me, Shinding."

"Ah thowt Ah'd better come on th' quiet-like, sir," Shinding rejoined, speaking with more confidence, now he was assured his master approved.

"You did quite right, Shinding. Come with me to the house and tell me all about it."

"Ah—Ah dunna want anybody to see me, sir, done yo' see."

"Nobody shall see you. I'll let you in myself and take you to my study. I'll see you in and out without any of the servants spotting you."

"Ah'll come, sir, but it wouldna do to be seen. If yo' dunna mind, sir, Ah'll walk behind yo' till we get near to th' house."

"Very well; come along."

When they passed the entrance-gate Slayter waited for his employé. "Ah coom because Ah dunna believe in strikes, sir, done yo' see," said Shinding, as they walked along.

"Nobody but a fool would," rejoined his master warmly.

"Ah believe in workin' peaceably, sir. They only do it to make theirsels look big, sir."

"Quite right, Shinding; you'll not be sorry for coming to me."

They reached the house, and Mr. Slayter instructed him to wait outside the portico in the shadow. "In a minute or two," he said, "I'll come and let you in myself."

"Thank yo', sir. Ah shall be obliged if yo' will."

Shinding had not long to wait, and Slayter led him into the study. "Sit down there," he said, pointing to an easy chair. "You know my principles, so I can't offer you anything to drink!"

"Ah dunna want nowt, sir."

"Well, I can give you a good cigar. Here you are, and light up at once." Mr. Slayter obligingly held a light for him, and Shinding began puffing away with the greatest deference. "And now," said the master, when he also had taken a cigar, "let me hear who the mischief-makers are and what they intend doing."

"Well, sir, some of 'em have put their heads together and are formin' a union for all yo'r works, and a good lot of Bentley's hands are in it too. They're payin' from twopence to sixpence and some of 'em a shillin' a week for strike pay, and as soon as they've got enough they mean to have a strike, if yo' winna do what they want. Ah hope you dunna mind, sir, but Ah had to pay like the rest, or Ah shouldna have been tow'd nowt. They made me go on th' committee, or Ah shouldna know what they were goin' to do, done yo' see,

sir? Ah got to know how things were goin', that road. Ah were feart to howd back, done yo' see sir? or they'd have thowt——"

"You did quite right," interposed the master. "Now, who are the leaders?"

Shinding fidgeted on his chair, and gave two or three puffs at his cigar. "Done yo' see, sir, Ah dunna like tellin' tales, but this is serious work for poor folk. Ah dunna howd wi' strikes at no price."

"That's all right," returned Slayter impatiently. "Who are they?"

"Well, sir, there's—there's owd Matthew Lemmer, and Joe Brinton, and Josh Plee, and Tom Bricknoll, and Bob Slaithwaite, and Dick Boothroyd, and Bill Ingham are the chief leaders. They—they reckon me one too."

"Um!" said Slayter grimly; "three Dissenters."

"Yes, sir, it's a Methody and Independent job, mostly. Owd Matthew Lemmer had a prayer-meetin' about it, Ah'm tow'd."

"Brinton and Bricknoll and Slaithwaite are not Dissenters, at any rate," said the master contemptuously. "Their place of worship is the public-house."

"No, sir, they never go to church or chapel. Ah tow'd 'em once or twice Ah couldna understand them bein' mixed up wi' Methodies."

"Wastreels, the three of them," commented Slayter. "Well, how soon do they think they can raise a strike?"

"They agreed, sir, it couldna be thowt o' till December or Janiuary."

"We'll see about that. At any rate, you have done quite right in telling me now, Shinding. You must let me know when anything fresh turns up, and you won't regret it. Here ; there is something for your trouble," and he held out a sovereign.

Shinding's eyes gleamed. "Ah dunna—Ah didna——"

"Take it, man ; you have earned it. It won't be the last, if you do your best."

"Thank yo' kindly, sir," he said, with brightened eyes. "Ah promise yo' Ah'll do my best, sir."

"You stand by me and you'll not regret it," repeated Slayter, as he let Shinding out. "Keep your eyes and ears open, and let me know what passes."

"I will that, sir ; yo' shall know what they're doin'."

Shinding fingered the sovereign in his pocket as he went along, and hummed lightly. It was a long time since he had had a sovereign to spare. He had once been treated to a whisky-and-soda, and he was wondering whether he dared go into a public-house and ask for the delicious mixture, when he gave a start, as Joe Brinton, coming suddenly out of the darkness, put his hand on his shoulder. He would rather have met any man just then than Brinton.

"Hello, Abram," he said ; "who'd have thowt o' meetin' thee up Kinder Road ?"

"Who—who'd have thowt of meetin' thee, Joe ?" said Shinding, making a great effort to appear composed.

"Wheer hast' been, lad, by theesel' up here ?"

“Ah—Ah went on an errand for my wife,”

“For thy wife? By gum, Abram, that tale winna do! Ah shall believe Sam’ll double our wages without askin’ if thy wife dares send thee on an errand.”

“Ah—Ah didna mind goin’ or Ah shouldna have gone,” returned Shinding, who was recovering his mental equilibrium.

“No, Ah reckon not. By gum, lad, tha meks me think of th’ things we promise th’ lasses when we’re courtin’—and they swaller it all. Ah remember thy wife when hoo were nobbut a wench—a hard-workin’ wench too. But theer! Ah remember my wife when hoo were about eighteen and prouder than a dog wi’ two tails, all becos Ah took her out. What blessed fools they are to marry us, mon!”

“No bigger fools than us, Ah reckon,” grunted Shinding.

“Arena they? Thee for one were no fool, Abram,” laughing, “when tha persuaded Martha hoo’d be happy lookin’ after thee. When Ah’ve had a sup o’ drink or Ah amna all smiles, my wife—and Ah reckon thine’s the same—brings up the things Ah used to say and th’ promises Ah made when Ah were tryin’ to get her. Ah tell her a woman of sense would ha’ known Ah could never have meant th’ fiftieth part of it; but, by gum, lad, we meant it then. There’s a warm time comin’ for th’ women, lad, when this strike comes off. We shall be out and about, talkin’ big and mekkin’ speeches, and enj’yin’ oursels after a fashion, and they’ll be a’ whoam tryin’ to fill th’ childer’s bellies

wi' nowt. Th' Almighty could ha' made a lot better job of it when He made me ; but if Ah were one of owd Lemmer's soort Ah should thank Him He didna mek me a woman."

" We arena bound to strike, Ah reckon."

" Yea, but we are. We werena meant to sweat all day to fill Sam's pockets, and tek a crust if he sees fit to send us one. We werena born black, tha knows. Hanna we got reets ? "

" Oh yea, of course—when it comes to that."

" What else does it come to ? We shall ha' thee standin' and spoutin' in th' market-ground in a week or two. For tha can spout, tha knows, 'specially in th' Wheatsheaf and in thy own house, though Ah should like to see thee doin' moor than spoutin'. But theer ! tha hasna gotten a gift that road, Ah reckon. Tha'll be at th' committee meetin' to-morrow neet ? "

" Ah—Ah reckon so."

" Well, so long, lad ; Ah mun be gettin' indoors," and Brinton went on. Shinding muttered curses after him. Although he would have denied it, he feared Brinton.

CHAPTER IX

THE VICAR TAKES A HAND

As the two men were parting Donnimore passed on his way to The Hollies to see Mabel. He was no sooner announced, however, than Slayter pounced upon him. "Come to my study, my dear boy," he said; "I want to speak to you."

Rather reluctantly Donnimore followed him and accepted an invitation to sit down.

"You ought to know what I'm going to tell you, Donnimore, for two reasons—first, because you are the parson of this parish, and, secondly, because you will soon be one of my family. I've had one of my workmen here to-night to warn me that in spite of your sermon, and in spite of everything, my men are preparing in secret for a strike. What do you think of that?" and he looked triumphantly at the vicar.

"An informer?" Donnimore could not help the question.

"Well, yes, in a way, but a man who hates the thought of a strike and wants the agitation stopped. A peaceable fellow who hates the wind-bags. He did quite right to let me know. Well, what do you think of it?"

"I am sorry to hear it—very sorry. I hoped they would listen to reason."

"Not they, my boy—not they. They're the wrong sort. Agitators, as you said. They think they're going to frighten me, but they've got hold of the wrong end of the stick, they'll find. I am going to get in the first blow and knock the bottom out of the whole business. What do you think I'm going to do?"—with a smile of triumph.

"I really could not guess, Mr. Slayter."

"I've got the names of half a dozen of their leaders. Well, on Friday night when they take their pay they'll find an extra week's wages for 'em. 'That is instead of notice,' I shall say, 'and I give you a week's notice to clear out of my cottages.' They all live in my cottages except one who lives at Hill Top and one who lives in his own. It'll be quite funny to see their faces, my boy; for they think I know nothing, of course."

Donnimore did not reply at once; he was thinking rapidly. For the first time he understood that for the workmen to incur the displeasure of Slayter meant not only the loss of employment, but to be driven from the village. Some men, he knew, are only happy in a state of migration, but to others it would be as a wrenching up by the roots.

"Cut off the head and there won't be much wriggle in the tail," laughed Slayter.

"Mr. Slayter," said Donnimore, trying to speak in colourless tones, "perhaps these men deserve all you have mentioned——"

"They do," interposed the other, with flushed face.

"But, as a clergyman, do you see, I feel it is my duty to plead for mercy at all times, and I would ask you to give these men another chance."

"I'm not going to truckle to the rascals," growled Slayter, his face more angrily flushed.

"That is the last thing I should wish you to do, Mr. Slayter," said Donnimore, speaking in the gentlest tone he could command. "But you know a clergyman's most obvious duty is to try to heal dissensions and make peace. You are justly incensed at these men, of course; but as a religious man I am sure you do not want strife and bitterness if it can be prevented."

"It's the way to stop strife—nip it in the bud. Besides, they aren't going to play the fool with me." Mr. Slayter was very sore at the mere suggestion of opposition.

"Certainly not," responded Donnimore. "Let me endeavour to act as peacemaker in this matter. I will see these men, if you will let me, and point out what misery their action will bring. If they will not listen to reason—well, you must, of course, take any steps you think necessary."

Slayter in his turn sat silent for a minute or two, with a frown on his face. "Well," he said, at last, "I don't mind letting *you* have your way, my boy, but I wouldn't have altered my decision for any other man on earth. I'm not going to yield to 'em one jot. Nobody could have treated their hands better than I have, but they're an ungrateful lot, and always will be. But there! to please you I've given my promise, and you can have your way."

"Thank you very much," said Donnimore. "I am sure you will not regret leaning to mercy's side. Now, if you will give me the names of these men I will see them and do my best to bring them to a proper frame of mind," and Donnimore took out his pocket-book.

"There's Lemmer, Matthew Lemmer—a Primitive and a canting old dog ; Brinton and Bricknoll (I can't remember their addresses for the moment) ; Plee and Slaithwaite and Ingham—the first two live in New Street, and Ingham lives by the Bridge ; and Boothroyd lives at Hill Top—he's another of the Dissenters."

"Thank you very much," said Donnimore, as he entered the names and addresses in his notebook. "I hope and pray that I may make peace. I shall find Mabel in the drawing-room, I think ? "

"Yes," said Slayter, a little ungraciously. Donnimore had distinctly disappointed him.

The moon had risen, and Donnimore proposed to Mabel that they should take a stroll in the grounds.

"I should love it," she said, going at once to put on a wrap. Donnimore watched her with love-lit eyes. It seemed to him that every day his affection for her deepened.

"What a glorious night, and how still and peaceful !" cried Mabel, when they got outside and stood gazing at the silver-lit landscape. "Even the hideous mill chimneys, Frank, look like graceful spires in this lovely light. And look down on Minvale ! What a shock it would be in the morning

for a stranger who got his first glimpse of it from here to-night ! ”

Donnimore smiled. “ My dearest, you will have to learn to love Minvale in all lights if you are to be the vicaress.”

“ Frank, we shan’t always spend our days here, shall we ? ” she cried, with a dismayed accent. “ I am looking forward to life with you in some beautiful village or pleasant little country town which mills and coal-pits haven’t spoiled and made the people rough and vulgar. I suppose the poor things are to be pitied, though. They can’t help being what they are, living in ugly, dirty Minvale.”

Donnimore did not reply, and they walked on a few steps. She touched him on the arm. “ Frank dear, don’t mistake me. Where you are there I would be, even if it were living in Min View or Brick Row down yonder.”

He took her hand and kissed it, and then held it in his. “ My Love and my Queen ! ” he said.

Hand in hand they walked through the shrubbery and round the paths that bordered the lawn. “ While we are at Minvale I shall really try to like your flock for your sake, dearest,” went on Mabel lightly. “ To please you I shall conduct myself as a model vicar’s model wife. I shall visit your flock and hold mothers’ meetings, and I shall have to interview Mr. Samuel Slayter and talk seriously to him about repairs to his cottages. And when we get a little tired and sick of it all, we will go for a long walk up on the hills yonder. When I am naughty or ill-tempered, don’t beat me—as is the

Minvale way with troublesome wives—but take me on the Peak, and I shall instantly become good as gold.”

Donnimore laughed, “On every moonlight night I shall take you out and show you Minvale, and impress upon you that that is the real village. As children play at fairies and believe them real, we must endeavour to convince ourselves at every opportunity that the world in moonlight is the real world. I am convinced that it is a good thing to see scenes, and men and women too, with the glamour upon them. You see, darling, you have so far been looking at me only in the moonlight.”

“Then it will always be moonlight for me, dear,” she said, dropping her light tone for the moment. “Why did dad keep you so long to-night, Frank? I thought of interrupting and telling him you came to see me.”

Donnimore laughed a little. “It was about Minvale, my dearest. He has discovered that some of the men are secretly organising a strike. He intended to dismiss them at the end of the week, but I begged him to allow me to intervene and, as a clergyman, try to be peacemaker. I am glad to say he consented.”

“Oh, don’t tell me anything now, Frank. It—it brings a cloud over the moonlight. See, there is actually a great black cloud approaching it. Do let us go in before the brightness is gone, or it will seem an omen. I will race you to the house.”

Mabel was very fleet, but by an effort Donnimore won and laughingly claimed his reward. He walked

home afterwards gay and light-hearted. As long as they loved each other all was right with the world.

Donnimore sat smoking in his study till after midnight, trying to decide which would be the best way to approach the agitators. His first intention was to go and call on each of them, but after longer reflection he was afraid that he might meet with rebuffs and even affronts, and at last he decided to address them by letter. He wrote out seven copies before he went to bed, which were delivered by his factotum, Tom Shrubb, the next morning. The terms were these :

“DEAR SIR,—I should be glad if you would call on me at the vicarage at seven o’clock on Friday evening, to discuss a question of great importance affecting your employment. I have some important news to communicate to you, and a proposition to make. Do not fail to come, as the business is of very great importance, and our meeting may prevent much trouble and misery. I have sent a copy of this letter to your friends (here followed the names of the other organisers), and I hope to see you all, without fail, on Friday at seven.

“Yours very faithfully,
“FRANK DONNIMORE.”

Shortly after six o’clock the next evening Brinton, having disposed of his tea, hastened to Lemmer’s house, carrying his letter with him. Matthew, who was always stained more or less with the dye of the

print works, made a point of washing thoroughly and changing his jacket before he sat down to his meals, and he was reading the letter for the third time as he drank his tea when Brinton entered.

"How do, mother—how do, Maggie?" he said to Mrs. Lemmer and her daughter. "Ah see tha hasna finished thy tay, Matthew, so Ah'll come agen in——"

"Nay, come in, lad; Ah've nearly finished."

Brinton walked in, refused a chair, but leaned against the dresser, smoking.

"Ah can guess what has browt thee, lad," said Lemmer.

"Ay, Ah've come to see if tha'd got a letter too; but Ah see tha'rt readin' it now."

"Yea, Ah were readin' it, lad."

"What dost' mek o' it, Matthew? Thine's th' same as mine, from what he ses. What's up? Shall tha go?"

Lemmer took off his spectacles. "He doesna tell us what it's about, but whatever it is Ah think we owt to go. He's written polite enough, and it winna do any harm to be polite too."

"Well, if tha ses so, Matthew, we'll go. T'other chaps will be guided by thee, Ah know. Ah wonder what's in th' wind? Tha knows, Matthew, Ah dunna trust passons any further than Ah can see 'em."

Lemmer smiled faintly, and Brinton saw it, and smiled too. "Oh, Ah know, Matthew; tha'rt sayin' in thy heart as Ah dunna mind trustin' th' landlord

o' th' Wheatsheaf and his soort, only tha were too polite to say it. Werena that it ? ”

Lemmer still smiled, but did not reply.

“ Well, tha'rt wrong, owd mon ; it's Bushmoor as trusts me now and agen. But we'll none argue about that now. Thee tell Josh Plee, and Ah'll tell th' others as we'll go. Are we to mention it about ? ”

“ It's plain to my mind, lad, as it's summat to do with th' strike, and all th' committee's got a reet to know. So has everybody, but Ah shouldna let it go no further till we've bin.”

“ Reet ; Ah'll tell th' others. It strikes me th' young passon will hear a bit to-morrow neet.”

“ How's Nance, Joe ? ” asked Mrs. Lemmer, a motherly, grey-haired woman, who suffered acutely at times from rheumatism, and looked several years older than her husband.

“ Hoo's poorly still, mother. Hoo doesna seem to mend much as Ah con see. Hoo ses a change o' air would do her good, hoo feels sure. Ah ax her why hoo doesna tek a trip to th' South o' France then. Hoo hasna bin at all well since th' last child were born. He's took all her strength, for he's a bonny little un.”

“ Send her away to her folks at Mellor for a week.”

“ Hoo winna go, mother. Hoo ses th' house would be worse than owd Jim Ledder's pigsty. It's no good axin' her what it matters if hoo isna theer to see. Ah've tow'd her Ah'll get somebody to put it to reets afore hoo comes back, if only hoo'll go.”

“ Hoo owt to go away for a week, at least. Tell

her Ah'll look in and do what Ah con to keep thee tidy."

"Thank yo', mother, Ah will. But Ah reckon Ah shall have to carry her if hoo goes. Well, good neet all."

Brinton, Bricknoll, and Slaithwaite in the Wheat-sheaf indulged in much speculation as to what the new move of the parson's might mean.

"Ah dunna know and Ah canna guess, but seein' as he's one of Sam's family, so to speak, it's some deep plan to best us, Ah'll tek me oath," said Bricknoll.

"Ah say, dunna go," said Slaithwaite. "It licks me, though, how he got howd of our names so pat. Somebody must have split."

"We're goin' to go, lads," said Brinton. "Why, to stop away would look as if we were feart o' him. By gum! Ah'll bet there'll be some straight talk to-morrow neet. Ah——"

"If it's left to owd Lemmer," interrupted Slaithwaite, "it winna be straight talk. He's a lot too quiet-like in his way o' spakin' to do much good. It wants a mon as isna feart o' spakin' out."

Brinton put down his mug of beer and turned on him a little impatiently. "It winna all be left to Matthew, but he'll start our side, Ah reckon. Sithee, lad, dost' think, becos tha shouts and curses every breath, that folks tek moor notice what tha ses? It's th' mon behind th' talk as meks all th' difference, lad. Nobody ever reckons me a Christian, Ah reckon, nor yet a Methody, which isna allus th' same thing; but Ah tell thee, lad, owd Lemmer

and two-three o' his soort Ah'd rayther have on my side than a bagful like thee or me."

"It's a puzzle to some o' us, Joe, what tha sees in owd Lemmer and Josh Plee," grumbled Slaithwaite.

"And it's a puzzle to me, lad, how thee and some moor think yo're goin' to get on without 'em. Ah had to tell th' same thing to Abram Shinding. Now, just answer me one thing, lad. If tha had to trust thy life to Matthew or Abram, which should tha choose?"

"Oh, well—Matthew, Ah reckon—only——"

"Tha'rt reet, lad; it'd be Matthew every time. And if tha thinks a strike is goin' to be a nice tay-party tha'd better go whoam and stay in bed till it's o'er."

"Oh, have it thy own road, mon," said Slaithwaite, burying his face in his beer-mug.

"Th' trouble is Ah canna have things my own road, lad," laughed Brinton. "Dost' think Minvale 'ould be like it is if Ah could ha' things as Ah wanted 'em? But that's enough now; we mun save our breath for th' passon."

Meanwhile, Donnimore, who did not feel at all sure of himself, had ridden over to lay the matter before his friend Adamson. "Perhaps," he said, when he had told his story, "it is foolish of me to put my hands in what I fear will be a wasps' nest; but to tell you the truth, Adamson, Mr. Slayter seemed to me not to be considering the good of Minvale, but gloating at the opportunity to take a

revenge on these men. You know I don't agree with what is called labour agitation, and I have a great contempt for the agitators, but I thought it only fair to draw them up, if possible, before they had gone too far."

Adamson raised his eyebrows. "It is monstrous," he said, with emphasis.

"What?" asked Donnimore.

"Slayter's action. It is because they are tenants of his as well as his employés that he dares presume to be so ruthless. I've said on more than one occasion that the principle is vicious and puts too much temptation in the way of any man. I was quite right."

"Well, there it is," said Donnimore, who did not wish to be drawn into argument. "I want you to come over to-morrow night to help me to talk to these men. You know them better than I do—and you are a diplomatist, you know, old fellow. If a smooth word will do you will never use a cutting one. Repartee is too great a temptation to me."

Adamson smiled faintly as he scrutinised the younger man. He had hoped that his eyes might have been opened, and Minvale might have had a sympathetic vicar who could have swayed the rather sordid village as he listed. "I'll come," he said; "but remember this, Donnimore—the men about here are democratic, and they are given to plain-speaking. You must not be offended if they speak their minds to you. I shouldn't wonder if in a few minutes they do not raise your temperature

a few degrees, but if you are to be successful try to keep below fever heat."

"Oh, I can keep cool under provocation, Adamson. Many thanks for your promise. I should have been at a loss if I could not have leaned on you. Come to dinner, and we can have a chat before the firebrands arrive."

CHAPTER X

BRINTON SPEAKS HIS MIND

THE representatives met on the lower bridge over the Min. There had been some discussion that day as to the guise in which they should appear at the vicarage. One or two felt that it would be an assertion of the democratic spirit to go in their working clothes and with the stains of labour on their faces. Ingham said he for one could not talk if he felt like a pig, and thought he should put on his Sunday clothes.

"Please theesel', lad ; Ah shanna put on mine," said Brinton. "For one thing, Ah have no church-goin' clothes, and my one white shirt is in th' wash this week."

Finally, on Lemmer's suggestion, it was resolved that they should don a tidy jacket and a clean collar. Thus attired they walked in a body towards the vicarage, some of them uncomfortably self-conscious, a feeling not decreased by the remarks addressed to them.

"Hello, Bob," said one man, addressing Slaithwaite, and with a nod in Lemmer's direction; "are yo' all goin' to a teetotal meetin' somewhere ?"

"No," growled Slaithwaite, who was ill at ease.

"Bob's none spakin' the truth; we're goin' to a teetotal meetin' reet enough," called out Brinton, who had always an answer ready.

"Wheer?" came the question.

"That'd be tellin'," was Brinton's reply. "Bob and me are so unused to teetotal meetin's we are shy about it."

"Well, wheer are yo' off, then?"

Brinton walked back to the questioner and spoke in a confidential tone. "We're playin' at soldiers, dost' see? We're goin' in the fields to be quiet, an' Ah'm th' captain, and Ah'm goin' to drill th' rest. Dunna tell, now," and Brinton hurried after his comrades.

Another stood in the road and studied them with affected interest. "Well, Ah never!" he cried. "Ah wondered what gentlemen it were comin'. Is it a prayer-meetin' or a tay-party?"

"It's nayther," said Brinton. "It's a body o' respectable men, fond o' th' beauties o' natur, goin' to watch th' moon rise from th' top o' Goddard's Knap. Dunna hinder us, for th' moon winna wait."

"Ah reckon," growled Slaithwaite, swallowing angrily, as they walked on—"Ah reckon we look like a pa'cel o' silly fools."

"Spake for theesel', Bob—spake for theesel'. It's thee, mon. Nob'dy can mek out thee, nayther on th' road to th' Wheatsheaf or th' road from it. Tha seems to be put out becos two-three are havin' a bit o' fun at thy expense. By gum! let 'em,

mon. It winna hurt thee, and there's none too much fun in Minvale nowadays."

They had not come as suppliants, and Lemmer led them to the front door of the vicarage. The maid let them in, and Donnimore greeted them in the hall. "I'm very glad to see you," he said, with a smile, shaking hands with each. "We will go into my study to talk. I've got a friend with me whom you all know—Mr. Adamson. I hope you won't mind."

They filed in awkwardly, and Adamson greeted them cordially. "Why, I know all your friends, Donnimore—at least by sight," he said. "Here is Bricknoll, who used to own that terrier, Snapper, that was the best ratter I ever saw. You missed something in not knowing Snapper. Didn't he, Bricknoll?"

"Best little worker Ah ever clapped eyes on," said Bricknoll. "Ah were rare and vexed when he deed, sir."

"I'm sure you were," assented Adamson.

"Now," said Donnimore, with a smile, to Bricknoll, "if you would please introduce your friends? I am sorry I don't yet know all your names."

"Matthew Lemmer, Joe Brinton, Josh Plee, Bob Slaithwaite, Bill Ingham, Dick Boothroyd," said Bricknoll gruffly, indicating his comrades with his thumb in the order they sat.

"Thank you. Now, you that are smokers, please light up. There is a jar of tobacco on the table, and please help yourselves without more invitation. I am going to have a pipe myself."

Four of them drew their pipes from their pockets and filled them from their own boxes. Adamson looked across at Donnimore and smiled meaningly. Adamson understood it as a hint that they were standing at arm's-length, and the smile was a signal to Donnimore not to press them.

"Now, my friends," said Donnimore, "I am sure you would like me to speak frankly, as I feel confident you will in return. It has become known that you are organising a strike, and you present are the leaders. Mr. Slayter, your employer, has just learnt that you are engaged in this, and it moved him to great wrath. I saw him on Wednesday, when he told me he had discovered you were the leaders—in fact, he gave me your names, or I could not have written to you—and he told me he was going to take strong measures to nip this idea of a strike in the bud. I begged him to give me an opportunity to talk over the matter with you and try to act as peacemaker. He consented, and that is why we are met here."

Bricknoll looked round on the others. "Who's bin tellin' tales to Sam, Ah wonder?" he asked.

Brinton answered him. "That doesna much matter just now. If th' mester knows, Ah want to ax yo', sir, what he means to do?"

Donnimore answered gravely, but without hesitation. "He intended giving you who are present a week's wages to-night instead of notice, and dismissing you instantly."

They looked at each other, and Brinton laughed. "Not a bad move o' his, Ah reckon, lads."

"I understand," went on Donnimore, "that most of you are tenants of his, and, of course, if you are dismissed you will have to leave your houses, which, in the circumstances, will mean leaving Minvale. I hope and trust," in a deeper tone, "that this conference, for your sakes, will bring peace. Let me beg of you to discuss this matter in a peaceful spirit. Surely things are not so bad that this misery cannot be avoided."

All the delegates, even Slaithwaite, looked at Lemmer to return answer.

"Now, Matthew," said Brinton, "the word's wi' thee."

"Yo' mun understand, sir, to begin wi'," said Lemmer, very quietly, "that a strike is th' last thing any of us wants, if it can be helped. Ah for one know what a strike is, sir, and it's weary, sad work at th' best. What does th' mester propose-like, sir?"

"I—I don't understand," said Donnimore. "I've told you what he threatened to do."

"What does Mester Slayter propose doin' to meet us in this matter, sir? Yo' are here as peace-maker, yo' telled us. We're willin' to listen to anythin' that will bring peace——"

"And our reets," interposed Bricknoll, with a shade of truculence in his tone.

"And our reets, as Tom ses," added Lemmer. "What will th' mester do to bring peace?"

Slightly dismayed, Donnimore glanced at Adamson, but summoned up enough courage to reply frankly. "I am afraid you don't understand," he

said, in a gentle tone. "Mr. Slayter intended to dismiss you peremptorily—I mean out of hand, without giving you an opportunity to say a word. I begged him not to do so, until I had spoken to you. If you stop this agitation the matter is at an end. If you don't I am afraid he will keep his word and dismiss you. I thought it my duty to see you and lay the matter before you. I wanted you to see the risks you were running before it was too late."

Lemmer passed his hand across his forehead. "We thank yo', sir, but we knowed all th' risks aforehand. We were hopin' to hear from yo' as th' mester were goin' to give way a bit, and we were ready to hearken. Things canna go on any longer as they are. It wouldna be worthy o' us as men in a free land to let 'em and none lift a hand to mend 'em."

"But a strike is a terrible business. Think of the misery you will bring——"

"Look here, sir," interposed Brinton; "we know what a strike is better than yo', Ah reckon. If yo' dunna want to see one, talk to th' mon as is doin' his best to raise one, and that's Sam Slayter. We've bin to him and tow'd him he isna doin' fair, but he ses in so many words, 'Get away, yo' dogs; think yo'rsels lucky if I chuck yo' a crust.' We've bin no better than mice, but we've turned at last. By gum, sir! we've got reets, and we mean to have 'em. And our childer have got reets too. If we sit down under this any longer we should be breedin' rabbits 'stead o' childer."

"Do you mean to say that your wages are not sufficient to keep yourselves and your families?" asked Donnimore.

"Ah'll just tell yo', sir, what happened," was Brinton's reply. "About two years ago trade was a bit bad, Ah'll none deny, and th' mester knocked ten per cent. off th' wages. What did it mean? It meant he lost nowt, but we lost it all. If we'd had a union then it wouldna have bin so easy for him, but all we did was to grumble and cuss a bit among oursels. Well, in a month or two trade mended, and this last six months it's bin rare and good, and we owt to be gettin' moor than we did two year since. Th' mester's mekkin' money in handfuls, and we're workin' hard to fill 'em, while we hanna enough to fill our bellies. Because we live in his houses he's gotten us under his thumb, as he thinks. Ah seed t'other day he'd given a hunderd guineas to th' Manchester Infirmary. 'Samuel Slayter, Esq., one hunderd guineas,' were in all th' papers, and Ah reckon folk thowt what a good chap he were. It owt to have bin our names, for it were our money. Have I tow'd th' tale reet, lads?"

"That's reet, Joe," said several.

"Ah dare say Mester Adamson, theer, knows it's reet too."

"I believe it is," said Adamson.

"Yes, yes; but a strike, my men, is jumping from the frying-pan into the fire," returned Donnimore.

"Maybe, but we've had enough o' th' fryin'-pan

—th' fire canna be worse," retorted Brinton. "Yo' live and work as some of us do, and yo'd believe in a week yo'd found out wheer hell is."

"You talk about a strike as light-heartedly——"

"Nay, sir—nay," interposed Lemmer. "There are no leet hearts in this business. Some o' us know what a strike means, and yo' can be sure we shouldna do what we are doin' if there were any other road. If th' mester'll meet us fair there'll be no strike."

"Now look here, sir; Ah'm goin' to talk plain, but, mind, Ah dunna mean no offence," said Brinton. "Th' truth is, yo' canna understand how workin' men can set theirsels up agenst th' mesters. To yo'r mind they mun be a set o' wastrels even to think of owt so wicked."

Donnimore shook his head, but Brinton did not stop. "Ah'm none blamin' yo' for it, done yo' see—it were th' road yo' were browt up, Ah reckon, and a lot depends on th' bringin' up. Moost of yo' parsons are allus prachin' as a poor man owt to keep in his place and be very thankful he's a place to be in, if it's only a pigsty. Yo' yo'rsel' prached a sermon agen us two-three weeks since, and Bill Ingham here tow'd yo' what he thowt about it th' same neet. We werena surprised, mind yo'; yo're a friend o' th' mester and courtin' his dowter——"

"That has nothing to do with the matter," interposed Donnimore, with cold hauteur.

"Yea, it has," went on Brinton, who was enjoying himself. "Yo're friends of th' rich, and yo' think

th' same as they do. It's only nat'ral. Now, Ah'm none a Christian, mind yo'; owd Matthew theer and Josh Plee 'ould tell yo' Ah'm one o' th' biggest sinners in Minvale——"

"Nay, nay, lad," interrupted Lemmer.

"Well," went on Brinton, "Ah'll own Ah am; but let me tell yo' this, sir—Ah can spot what's what in religion as well as any mon, for Ah tek an interest in it, and nowt pleases me moor than to see genuine Christians. Ah shouldna have to go out o' this room to lay me hands on one or two. Well, sir, yo'r Mester werena allus hobnobbin' with th' rich. By gum! if He were here now He'd be here to-neet, spakin' for us and puttin' it strong. Nowt as Ah can say 'ould be equal to what He'd say. Yo're young, sir, and a likely young feller, and a lot o' folks like yo', Ah'm towld. Ah wish yo' could see things wi' a poor mon's eyes. Ah know yo'll say, like a lot moor, that we're wastrels, and spend our money on drink. Some o' us do, but owd Matthew and Josh Plee and Boothroyd theer are tee-tees. Ah amna; by gum! if it werena for a glass now and agen we meight as well go and throw our carcasses in th' Min."

"But don't you see, my man," interposed Donni-more, "that if you did not spend money on drink you would have more comfort? Granted your wages are low, you do not gain anything by wasting them foolishly."

Bricknoll growled and began to speak, but Brinton waved his hand for him to keep silent. "Happen so; and if th' mester lived on bread-and-butter and

tay, and didna keep horses, and let his dowter wait on him instead of keeping servants, he could pay us decent wages and leave enough for th' missionairies at last. If it werena for a sup o' drink mekkin' us forget things for an hour or two th' mesters would have bin murdered afore this. By gum, sir! Ah wish Ah could plant yo' down in one o' our houses for a week to live th' same life, and ate and drink th' same, and work th' same, and yo'd begin to understand a bit. But Ah can tell yo' this: if yo' want peace yo' mun talk to Sam—th' mester, Ah mean. If he's goin' to bag us becos we winna stop doin' what we are doin', well and good; we shall know what to do."

Donnimore did not reply for a moment; then he asked, "I suppose you are speaking for all?"

"Ax 'em," said Brinton; but they intimated that Brinton had been their spokesman.

"I am very sorry," said Donnimore gravely. "As you said, Mr. Brinton, I cannot look at things from your point of view. But I have still hopes of keeping peace. I will see Mr. Slayter in the hope that he will be able to make some concessions. But on your part you will have to meet him half-way. There must be compromise."

"Thank yo', sir," said Lemmer. "Ah do hope yo' can mek th' mester a bit reasonable. At any rate, we'll be thankful to yo' for tryin'."

Lemmer rose, and the others followed his example. Donnimore held out his hand. "Whatever happens," he said a little wistfully, "I hope we can be friends."

Lemmer clasped his hand with warmth. "Ah hope so, sir, and Ah can say wi' all my heart, God bless yo' and guide yo'. Two-three of us have bin prayin' that the mester meight do th' thing that is reet. Yo' can go as far as that with us, Ah hope?"

"Yes, indeed," said Donnimore gravely. He saw them to the door and bade them good night again.

"God bless them!" said Adamson, and then turned with a laugh to Donnimore. "*Downright*, Donnimore. I like that word. No man ever spoke as plainly to you as Brinton, I warrant. That's our way in this district. It's like the wind from the Peak in winter—buffeting, but invigorating."

Donnimore's face was still grave. "Did I hear the real facts of the case, Adamson?"

"I believe you did. They have genuine grievances, without doubt. They have been compelled to share in the bad times, but not allowed to participate in the good. Winter is coming on, and their wretchedness will be great. I like that phrase of Brinton's—if they did not stand up for their rights they would be breeding rabbits instead of children. Forcible, wasn't it? But they are going to stand up for their rights, or I don't know them."

Donnimore puffed in silence for a minute or two. "I shall see Slayter and talk it over with him," he said at last. "It is rather awkward—my relations with him, I mean. Though," his face brightening, "I suppose in consequence I should make a good ambassador. There is one consolation—he will have to give them another week now. I shall not go to him until to-morrow afternoon."

CHAPTER XI

THE SIGNAL FOR THE FIGHT

DONNIMORE and Mabel had planned a walk for the following afternoon through Mintley and on the hill that dominated it, called Longside. The day was threatening, but Mabel was determined to go, declaring that it was one of the exhilarating experiences of life to battle with the wind and rain of the hills. Donnimore hoped it would help him to forget the anxieties which the conference had caused him. A vicar and the affianced lover of Slayter's daughter, he was in a difficult position, but he hoped that he could persuade the master to be a little conciliatory. He wished it were possible to him to let matters take their course while he looked calmly on, but every fibre of his spirit protested against such cowardice. He wished to avoid Slayter until the evening, but he was at home when he went to call for Mabel, and inquired in a tone that offended Donnimore's ears what the rascals were going to do.

Happily Mabel intervened. "Papa, no business now. We are going on Longside; you must have a discussion some other time."

"I will come up this evening, Mr. Slayter," said Donnimore quickly.

As they battled against the stormy breeze the vicar's spirits rose. On the hill-top they paused to look round. "Yes, there is Minvale," said Mabel, with a laugh. "I never climb up here and look down on it but I fancy I am higher morally as well as physically. Is there going to be a strike, dear?"

"I—I hope not," said Donnimore.

"I'm not going to spoil the walk by discussing them, but they were not very reasonable, I am sure. It would be contrary to their natures. Sweet reasonableness was never seen in Minvale."

"What a glorious breeze!" said Donnimore.

"And what a glorious rain-squall is coming!" laughed Mabel. A minute later it came in a blinding sheet, and they raced for the slight shelter of a wall.

"I hope you won't take cold, dearest," said Donnimore.

"Oh dear no," said Mabel, still laughing. "I love it out here; we shall have a wet walk home, and I'm glad. See, the brave rain has blotted out Minvale. We are here solitary, save for the poor sheep there."

"I am glad to know it, my darling. The sheep won't mind, even if they see," and he took a lover's privilege.

"Where is your clerical dignity?" asked the laughing girl. "If one of your flock saw you, there would be a fine tale for tea-parties."

"If my flock saw me they would applaud the human weakness of their pastor. There is not one of them but would be glad to do the same."

"There are some of your flock, sir, who would



"YES, THERE IS MINVALE," SAID MABEL.

doubt your orthodoxy if they saw you. But come, let us go on. I'll be candid enough to confess that the beating of the rain has a very good effect on one's complexion."

"A good complexion in a parson's wife is most unorthodox, my dear. It will neutralise all my sermons. A pretty hat and a good complexion show that a parson's wife is not what she ought to be."

"Then you mustn't marry me, Frank, for I am vain of my taste in hats."

When they reached Minvale Donnimore disappointed Mabel by refusing to accompany her to The Hollies. "No," he said, "I have some business to attend to, and I must call on your father after dinner."

When he reached the vicarage he sat in his study smoking reflectively. He had arrived at no solution of his difficulty when he put on his hat and cloak and went to The Hollies.

Slayter received him in his study. "I can see, my dear boy," he said, "you could do nothing with them. I didn't think you would—I know the breed, do you see, and you don't. Were they impudent?"

"No," said Donnimore curtly. Slayter's tone and manner grated, which helped him a little in trying to regard the millowner from a detached point of view.

"I shouldn't have been surprised to hear they were, my boy. They've no reverence for the cloth. They'd no respect for poor old Bream."

"I did not expect any reverence," said Donnimore, in the same curt tone. "I wanted them to meet me man to man, and to speak frankly. I tried my utmost to put the idea of a strike from their minds. They told me they knew better than I what a strike meant, but they seemed to think there was nothing else before them. They believe they have grievances, do you see, Mr. Slayter."

"Of course they do; they always have, to hear them talk," cried Slayter wrathfully. "If I paid every man jack of 'em five pounds a week they'd have just as many grievances."

"But, excuse me, Mr. Slayter, if they were speaking truthfully I can understand their thinking they have a grievance. They gave me to understand that eighteen months ago you reduced their wages because trade was bad, on the understanding that when times were better their wages were to go back to the normal level. They maintain that you have not kept that promise."

Mr. Slayter's cheek was flushed, and there was an angry glint in his eyes. He rose from his chair and stood with his back to the fire, his hands under his coat-tails. "I never did promise them," he cried. "Beside, trade has been very little better, and I found that I have been paying them too much. They are getting more now than they ought to have. If it weren't for the drink their wages would be more than sufficient. There is need of some very earnest temperance work in this parish, you will find."

Donnimore replied courteously, but now he was

entered on the controversy he meant to beat it out. "But, excuse me, Mr. Slayter, three of the deputation, I found, were temperance men—abstainers, in fact."

"Dissenters to a man," cried Slayter, turning round to poke the fire viciously.

"True, but abstainers. I am only trying to show you that it is not drink that makes all of them discontented."

"Dissent is as bad," growled Slayter, who was using efforts to control his temper, but only making evident how near it was to being completely lost.

"You must forgive me, Mr. Slayter, but, do you see, I want to lay this matter before you calmly but fully. I consider I am under a promise to these men to do so."

"Oh, very well; go on."

"When I mentioned drink one of them told me that though drinking did not improve matters it was the one thing that made them forget their miseries—that it dulled their acute feelings, and as a matter of fact kept them from violence. It was a new idea to me."

"Miseries!" snorted the master.

"I found them quiet, but determined. They did not seem to regret being dismissed at all. Mr. Adamson, I may say, was present, and they appealed to him as to the correctness of their version. He confirmed it."

"Adamson! I never had any faith in Adamson. He's a Socialist in secret, I have always thought."

"I have a great respect for Mr. Adamson,"

Donnimore returned quietly. "But come, Mr. Slayter, cannot you make some little concessions? Do you see, the bad feature in the business is that they think you have not kept faith. I believe it would be policy to be conciliatory, but beyond that our religious principles call upon us to heal differences and strive for peace, even if we have to sacrifice both our money and our pride a little. These men, I am sure, will meet you half-way."

The last remark was unfortunate, as it gave Mr. Slayter an opening. He became almost bland for the moment. "My dear fellow, that shows you don't understand these people a little bit. Of course it's not to be expected, but when you have lived as long amongst them as I have you'll know. Meet me half-way? They'd say at once they'd frightened me, and I should never have another minute's peace as long as the works were open. No, my boy, you don't understand these business matters, I can see. Bentley and a few more would think me a traitor if I gave way, for their hands would instantly try to screw more out of them. I don't blame you in the least, mind. I suppose it was your duty to try to make peace—and all that. But I know 'em, d'ye see, and they're not going to get over me. I shall have that lot in the office on Monday and give them a week's notice."

"I am very sorry, Mr. Slayter—very sorry. You see the men believe that because you own most of the houses here you have an unfair advantage and would be more reasonable if dismissing them did not mean driving them from Minvale."

Mr. Slayter showed a little of his irritation. "My dear Donnimore, if you listen to all the ridiculous things these fellows say you will have no time for anything else. Didn't I build those houses for their convenience? Didn't it save 'em from a long walk to and from their work? You can't satisfy 'em any way, and you will find that out before you've been at Minvale long."

Donnimore rose, his pride slightly wounded. "I must look in now on Mrs. Slayter; I know she is expecting me. Shall I announce myself?"

"Yes, yes," said Slayter. "I—I have a little business to attend to. Good night."

"Good night, Mr. Slayter."

The "little business" was to write out a formal week's notice to the ringleaders, and to the five who were his tenants a notice to cease their tenancy in seven days. He gave them to his coachman to deliver that night. "Here is five shillings for your extra trouble, Ball," he said affably. "Be sure you deliver them all to-night; it is very important."

When Donnimore was gone Mr. Slayter went upstairs to speak to his wife. He was still irritated, and he did not disguise his feelings from her.

"Donnimore been to see you? I've been very disappointed in Donnimore this evening. He is taking a tone that won't do at all, and if it weren't for Mab's sake I should have spoken very plainly to him."

"What is the matter?" asked Mrs. Slayter, who had been suffering very acutely all day.

"Oh, it's about those fellows who are getting up

a strike. He's been trying to persuade me to give way to them. It doesn't say much for his common sense that they've imposed upon him. However, I let him see plainly that he can't teach me my business, and I hope he'll have sense enough not to try to interfere again. I've just written to the ringleaders giving 'em a week's notice. They shall see who's master in Minvale."

"Sam," said Mrs. Slayter, very earnestly, "don't be hard. They can be led, but they won't be driven. Do meet them reasonably. We can afford it—to put it on the lowest grounds."

"Dash it all! ain't I reasonable?" he cried. "But there! I'll go, or I shall say more than I want to," and he made a noisy exit.

It was at such times as these that Mrs. Slayter became impatient at the fate that bound her helplessly to her bed. She could, she felt sure, have softened her husband's asperities and coaxed him into greater reasonableness had she been able to take her place in the world. She noticed that with every increase of prosperity he was more prone to ride roughshod over his fellow-creatures.

Meanwhile, the notes of dismissal were being delivered; but Brinton, Bricknoll, and Slaithwaite did not reach home till the public-houses were closed, and it was too late to seek out their fellow-leaders at that hour for conference. Brinton went home carrying a jug of stout in his hand. He had sat for over two hours in the Wheatsheaf that evening, but he had had little to drink, and was not looked upon

as a profitable customer. In spite of all his talk about drink he was never known to be intoxicated, and on the few occasions when he exceeded his usual limit and became "sprung," as he termed it, his humour deserted him for days and his temper became morose.

Mrs. Brinton was dozing before the fire waiting for him. When in good health she was a rosy-cheeked, energetic woman with a rattling tongue and a cheerful disposition, but now she looked pale, careworn, and untidy. Saturday was cleaning day, and though she was not fit for any prolonged physical effort she had—although compelled to sit down and weep several times from sheer weakness—scrubbed the stone floor and made the house spick-and-span, bathed the children, and packed them off to bed. The furniture was scanty, and on one occasion, when in a fit of depression she declared that it filled her with shame, Brinton looked at her and laughed. "Sithee, lass," he said; "Ah'm only one o' Sam's hands, and we canna have childer and antimacassars on th' cheers. If tha wanted antimacassars and a pianner tha should ha' done wi' th' childer as if they were puppies—drowned 'em. We canna have it all roads, lass."

Mrs. Brinton was tired and rather fretful when Brinton entered, whistling.

"Ah didna think tha'd stay out till th' last minit to-neet, Joe, me as badly as Ah am," she complained.

"Ah thowt tha'd be glad to have me out o' th' road, lass," was Brinton's reply. "Ah couldna ha' done thee any good by stoppin' in."

“Yea, tha could ; tha could ha’ put th’ childer to bed for me.”

“Ah shouldna ha’ done it reet for thee, lass,” returned Brinton good-humouredly. “But come ; let’s have a bit o’ supper. Sithee, Ah’ve browt thee a sup o’ stout. It’ll go gradely with a bit o’ bread and cheese.”

“Ah were longin’ for a sup o’ stout, only we canna afford it,” returned Mrs. Brinton, brightening. “Oh, Ah’d forgot ; there’s a letter for thee. Bill Ball browt it, so Ah reckon it’s from th’ mester. It’s theer on th’ mantelpiece.”

“A five-pund note, Ah’ll be bound, to send thee to Blackpool with,” said Brinton, opening it. He whistled when he read it. “Oh, it’s what Ah expected, lass. Ah didna reckon th’ young passon could do much wi’ him. Oh, very well, Sam, owd man ; it’s thee or us has to knuckle under.”

“Let me read it,” said Mrs. Brinton, and Joe passed it to her. “Lord save us !” she exclaimed. “What shall us do, lad ? ”

“Feight him,” said Brinton grimly. “But draw up to th’ table and see if this winna warm thee.”

“Wheer shall we go when we’re turned out next week, lad ? ” asked Mrs. Brinton.

“Before owt else get thy supper, wench ; if tha can drink it all, do. Ah browt it for thee.”

“What are we goin’ to do, lad ? ” she asked again, in the middle of her meal.

“Ah know what tha’rt goin’ to do, Nance. Ah shall tek thee off to Mellor to-morrow wi’ th’ childer.

It means a strike, does this, and tha'rt better out o' it."

Mrs. Brinton shook her head. "Ah'm none goin', Joe; my place is here wi' thee. Ah reckon we can go through it together, lad," wiping her eyes.

"Ah know we could, and Ah'd like to have thee in th' house, but Ah'm none goin' to have thee dead yet awhile, if Ah can help it. Tha's enough to do to keep goin' now—tha canna stand moor. A strike comes hard on th' women, lass."

"A lot comes hard on th' women, but Ah can go through it, Ah reckon."

"Nay, wench, Ah'm tekkin' thee to thy sister's in th' morn. Tha's pluck enough for owt, or tha wouldna have married me. Ah shouldna say nowt about it if tha were well and strong, but tha mun go, my dear."

"Ah winna go."

"Very well," retorted Brinton. "Ah've looked out a wife when tha'rt dead. Liz Dokes will have me, Ah'm sure."

Liz Dokes was a slatternly, evil-tongued woman who lived near, and Mrs. Brinton was deeply moved. "Joe," she beseeched, "promise me tha'll never marry her."

"If tha'll live," returned Brinton, with a laugh, "Ah'll promise thee Ah winna marry nob'dy. And if tha wants to live tha mun go to Mellor to-morrow."

Mrs. Brinton smiled and then wiped away a few tears. She told her husband his faults very often, but she would have maintained in the face of the

world that no woman could have a better husband. It was very rare indeed that Brinton kissed his wife or gave her words of tenderness, but she knew he was hers.

“Owd Lemmer’s prayed about it to-neet, Ah know,” he said with a laugh, to divert her thoughts. “Well, Ah’m none one o’ th’ prayin’ soort, lass, but if Matthew remembered thee and th’ childer to-neet Ah shanna mind. If it’s fine we’ll set off soon after breakfast.”

“Bessie and Tom will lose their marks at th’ Sunday schoo’,” returned Mrs. Brinton. “Bessie winna want to go; hoo hasna missed moor than twice this year.”

“Eh, lass, there’ll be moor than marks missin’ afore long. Do thy best with her. Hoo likes goin’ to her Aunt Bessie’s, tha knows. Well, we’ll get to bed. Ah for one’ll pull Minvale down about Sam’s yead afore Ah’ll give in.”

“Dost’ think t’others will strike?”

“Ay, like a shot. Come on, now; get to bed, for tha’rt tired, lass!”

CHAPTER XII

COUNTING THE COST

By Sunday afternoon all Minvale knew that the ringleaders were dismissed and that by the end of the week a strike would have begun. Minvale was excited, but Matthew Lemmer attended serenely to his religious exercises. Sunday was an island of peace, and he had no mind to launch on the turbulent sea that encircled it. Josiah Plee was away preaching in a neighbouring village. At all times his preaching was of a passionate nature, but he preached with more fervour than usual that day, and his prayers were so vehement that they drew many "amens" and "glories" from his congregation. The devil, against whose works he testified, to his mind bore the image of Samuel Slayter.

On the Monday evening there was a knock at Lemmer's door, and Maggie Lemmer opened it to the vicar. "Is Mr. Lemmer in?" he asked. "I should like to have a chat with him."

"He's in; will yo' step inside, sir?" and Maggie led him into the parlour, where Lemmer joined him. Donnimore keenly scrutinised the room. Here was comfort, and some refinement, he could see.

"It's none very warm here, sir, with no fire,"

said Lemmer ; “ but my lass didna think it polite to ax yo’ into th’ kitchen.”

“ I don’t mind where it is, Mr. Lemmer. What has happened since Friday night ? ”

“ Yo’ve heard, sir, o’ th’ letter we all had—all that were at yo’r house, Ah mean ? ”

Donnimore frowned. “ Yes, I heard something about it this afternoon,” he said. His anger had burned fiercely that afternoon from wounded feelings. It was evident to him that Mr. Slayter’s answer to his pleading was to write those notes at once.

“ We were expectin’ summat o’ the soort, sir, so it didna tek us much by surprise. Some of us had no hope that yo’d be able to change th’ mester, though Ah for one prayed yo’ meight.”

“ I tried my best, Mr. Lemmer. Well, what is going to be done now ? ”

“ If nothing fresh turns up, sir, we shall all, or at any rate moost o’ us, come out on strike Sat’d’ay.”

“ Do you really believe in striking, Mr. Lemmer ? We are speaking in confidence now, and I should like to know your real opinion. Can you reconcile striking, for instance, with your religious professions ? ”

“ Well, sir, Ah look upon a strike as no better than war——”

“ You are right there, Mr. Lemmer.”

“ And Ah’m agen war, sir, if yo’ can have peace any other road. But we’re men and women, sir, that have reets, and if we didna stand up for them we should be slaves, and slavery is very bad, both

for slaves and slave-owner. Dunna think, sir, we hanna counted th' cost. We have that, and Ah know it'll cost a lot. Ah may be wrong, but Ah've prayed a lot, and this is work Ah feel th' Lord would have me doin'."

Donnimore nodded to signify he understood, but he said, "There is a commandment about not resisting evil."

Lemmer fastened on it in a flash. "Ah'm rare and glad, sir, yo' think it evil. It is evil. But if yo' interpreted it that way Satan would have everythin' his own way in a week. Now, Ah'll tell yo' this, sir; as far as Ah'm concerned Ah amna called on by necessity to strike. This house is my own and Ah've summat saved. But there are plenty in Minvale who canna mek both ends meet. For why? Ah'm goin' to put it plainly, sir—becos th' mester is robbin' 'em o' their just reets. Ah tell yo', sir, Ah've prayed neet and day that the Lord would help th' mester to do the reet thing, but Ah see now He isna goin' to give us for prayin' what we can feight for. Ah'll tell yo' what, sir, His kingdom canna spread in Minvale while things are as they are, while th' mester tries to mek out he's a Christian, and all th' time sits in Satan's seat. The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Ah believe it, sir, but Ah'm goin' into this business to try and extend His kingdom a bit."

Donnimore smiled, and shook his head.

"Ay," said Lemmer, "Ah know what yo'll say—Ah've said it mesel'—that a strike's lettin' th' devole unchained. It is, sir, but it seems to me the Lord's

road o' plantin' His foot down here. Ah hope, sir, with all me heart, yo'll help to keep th' chain on as much as possible and as long as possible."

"If there's a strike, Mr. Lemmer, what is going to be done for dwellings? Mr. Slayter will, of course, clear all strikers out of his houses. Have you reckoned on that?"

"We have, sir. We've friends over yonder at Mentley that'll tek in a good many."

"I came to tell you, Mr. Lemmer, that I spent this afternoon in going to some of the poorer cottages in Minvale to see things with my own eyes, and to question the women about their incomes. It has brought me to the opinion that living could be made better in Minvale. For one thing, some of the houses are in a very bad condition indeed, and, for another, I am sure Mr. Slayter could do more without hurting himself. I confess to you frankly and freely that too much rent is paid for some of the houses I saw this afternoon."

"Ah'm very glad yo've seen for yo'rsel', sir."

"Now, I don't believe in strikes at all, Mr. Lemmer, but I am going to try to get things altered. I shall see Mr. Slayter, and do all I can this week to avert the strike. On your side I want you to promise me that you will do all you can with your colleagues to get them to be as peaceable and quiet as possible this week—not to do anything to irritate Mr. Slayter. I have strong hopes that the whole matter may be settled amicably."

"Ah can promise for mesel', sir, and Ah think Ah can promise for t'others."

"Thank you, Mr. Lemmer; I thought I might rely on you. I shall do my best to get some concessions."

He held out his hand as Lemmer showed him to the door, and the old man took it. "Thank yo', sir," he said.

Lemmer went back to his wife, who was knitting and meditating. She was a matronly woman, and, though she suffered severely from rheumatism, she had not allowed pain to dominate. A wealth of white hair crowned her smiling, placid face. Those who knew her most intimately were aware that there were unsuspected deeps in her character.

Lemmer told her what had taken place between him and the young vicar, and added, "Eh, mother, Ah'm rare and pleased; there's th' makin' o' a fine young feller in him. It's taken facts to mek him try and do owt for us. Ah were just wonderin' how his interference 'ould fit with courtin' th' mester's dowter. He's reckoned that in, Ah hope."

"Dost' think he'll be able to change th' mester?" asked Mrs. Lemmer, looking up from her knitting.

"No, mother, Ah dunna. He tried on Sat'day, but th' mester, tha knows, sent them notices out th' same neet."

"Tha thinks it'll be a strike then, fayther?"

"Ah do," said Lemmer, in a sober tone. "Ah canna see owt else, unless th' young passon can do moor this week than he did last."

Mrs. Lemmer glanced round the cosy room. "It isna becos we hanna prayed, fayther," she said. "Ah were lookin' round many times to-day, and

there's a lot it'll be hard for me to part with. But it's reet, Ah know, and dunna thee think Ah canna do it with a willin' heart and a cheerful face."

Lemmer looked at her. "What dost' mean, mother?" he asked, in perplexity.

"Ah mean th' furnitur and whatnot."

"What about th' furnitur, mother?" asked Lemmer, more perplexed.

"Why, fayther, there's a lot in Minvale who afore another month is out 'ull be clemmed and starved. We canna be livin' here in comfort, tha knows, if t'others are clemmed."

"No," said Lemmer, "tha'rt reet, mother. But there's eighty pounds in th' bank we'll spend."

"And sell this after, Matt. Th' childer shanna cry for a crust while we have one, shall they?"

"No. . . . But none th' organ, mother—none th' organ." There was a sharp note of anguish in Lemmer's voice, and his face was strained. "We'll keep th' organ, mother."

Mrs. Lemmer swallowed thrice before she could speak. "Dost' think, fayther," she said, very gently—"dost' think he could be happy, even at th' Lord's reet hand, while it were here and childer we know were cryin' for a crust?"

Mrs. Lemmer was referring to the tragedy of their parenthood. Three years before their youngest child and only son, John, a youth of eighteen, had been suddenly cut off by pneumonia. Even as a child he had given evidences of possessing an uncommon musical talent, and the parents had done all they could to foster it. He was organist at the

chapel, and a hymn he had composed was sung at the "Sermons," as they call the Sunday-school anniversary in the north. The American organ was a gift to him on his twelfth birthday, and the parents' greatest delight was to sit in an evening, while the lad played to them, and watch his rapt face. The "Hallelujah Chorus" was Lemmer's favourite, and if he were feeling ill or depressed the lad would go and play it for him with all the fire of which he was capable. They took the blow with few open expressions of grief, but it added years to them, and henceforth the organ was a sacred possession.

"Ay, mother," said Lemmer slowly, "th' organ mun go," and then he covered his face with his hands. Mrs. Lemmer was quietly crying.

Suddenly Lemmer laughed—a laugh that rang gladly, though his eyes were suffused with tears. It was Mrs. Lemmer's turn to look in perplexity. "Eh, Ruth! eh, Ruth!" he said. "Twenty-nine year have we bin wed, and Ah never reetly knowed me wife till now—none till to-neet, mother. Twenty-nine year tha's lain by me side, and wept with me and rejoiced with me, and yet, if it hadna bin for this, Ah shouldna have known thee gradely till we got up yonder. Eh, lass, what wonders He can do! Ah were feelin' sore, and now Ah'm uplifted—Ah'm uplifted. Yea, th' organ shall go. Ah shall feel like singin' th' chorus th' lad played when it goes out o' th' house." He walked unsteadily to his wife, bent over her, and kissed her cheek. "We've a meetin' at eight," he said, in a normal tone; "Ah mun be goin'."

The meeting was to discuss ways and means, and the full strike committee of sixteen were present. Owing to Mr. Slayter's precipitating the crisis, they had not nearly so much for a fighting fund as they hoped, but that was not going to deter them.

"Well," said Bricknoll, "we're all here, and yo' known why. But the fust thing Ah should like to know is, who went with tales to Sam? Someb'dy did, it's plain. Ah'll begin with thee, Matthew—were it thee?"

There was a laugh as Lemmer smiled and shook his head. The question was put to each in turn, and Shinding denied it among the rest.

"It seems it were nob'dy, Tom, and it doesna much matter now," said Brinton. "Only Ah'll say this: if there is a traitor here among us Ah'll warn him to clear out now. Our feightin' blood'll be up afore long, and if we find him out then he'll wish he'd ne'er been born. Now we'll get to business."

"Ah've summat to say afore we begin," said Lemmer. "Mester Donnimore has just been to our house."

"He never come inside surely, Matthew?" said Brinton. "Or had he forgot tha'rt a Methody?"

Lemmer smiled. "He hadna forgotten, lad, Ah reckon," and the old man went on to tell what had taken place.

"Ah give him th' promise, lads, and Ah knowed Ah were safe in so doin'. Ah'll tell yo' what, me lads; he'll mek a fine young feller, will yon. He's none found his feet yet."

“He’s courtin’ Sam’s dowter,” said Slaithwaite, who always spoke in a growl.

“Ah know,” said Lemmer quietly. “That’s why Ah’ve said what Ah have. It would have been th’ easiest thing for him to have said nowt.”

“Well!” said Brinton, “it’s agreed we’re goin’ to feight, and we hanna much brass to feight on. If yo’ like Ah and Josh theer’ll go to Stopport [Stockport] Sat’d day afternoon, and see two-three who meight get th’ unions to help us. What done yo’ say?”

There was no objection raised, and the question of quitting their houses came up. As more than three-fourths of Minvale would likewise have notice to quit it was resolved that they would remain until evicted by force of law.

“Bygum, lads! there’s goin’ to be a pretty feight,” cried Brinton. “Ah dunna know how it is, but th’ thowt of a feight has made me young agen. We’re all fond of a feight—Christians as well as other folk. Nay,” looking at Plee, “tha’s no need to deny it, lad; it’s true.”

“It isna; it’s agen——”

“It is, Ah tell thee. Thee for one art allus feightin’ th’ devvle, on’y th’ mistake yo’ Christians mek is yo’ will look for him in th’ wrong place. Yo’ seem to fancy he’s allus in public-houses or wheer there’s a bit o’ fun goin’, but Ah’ll tell thee a sacret, lad—he’s generally hidin’ in th’ chapels and churches, and while yo’re talkin’ about him he’s sittin’ close to yo’ with his fingers to his nose mekkin’ game o’ yo’.”

"Ah've tow'd thee afore," broke in Plee hotly, "to stop sneerin' at what tha doesna believe in. Tha'rt allus on."

Brinton laughed. "Keep thy hair on, lad. What is it Ah dunna believe in? Ah dunna believe that everybody who goes carryin' a Bible about on Sundays is too good for this world, and Ah dunna believe yo've got a door to yo'r chapel or any other that can keep th' Owd Mon out."

"If tha knows so much, why doesna thee do summat theesel' instead o' talkin'?"

"Ah'm doin' summat now," rejoined Brinton imperturbably. "Ah'm pointin' out to thee and t'others who are feightin' th' devvle wheer yo' can find him. Ah reckon that's a big help. Tha knows as well as me he canna be far off when Sam sits in his pew in th' church, and if he isna present at th' teetotal meetin's when Samuel Slayter, Esq., is in th' cheer Ah'm a foo'. But theer! Ah feel ready for owt now a feight's comin' off. Ah took th' missis and th' childer to Mellor yesterday to her sister's, and Ah'm ready for owt now—even a glass o' beer. Who's goin' with me to drink to th' strike? Good neet, Matthew, and yo' as winna come."

"Ah wish," said Plee, who still felt sore—"Ah wish Joe would stop talkin' as he does. Ah try, but Ah canna help bein' put out when he talks that road."

"Ah wish none of it were true," said Lemmer. "Ah wish there were no reason for what he ses."

"Of course," said Plee, "we're none of us perfect."

"No, lad. Ah'll tell thee what; we want a

revival in Minvale and all th' places round. Ah suppose a strike is th' wrong time for lookin' for one, but what a grand thing it'd be if th' strike browt on a revival ! ”

“ Yea, we want a revival badly,” Plee assented. “ Ah should like to get Joe in.”

“ Eh, lad, Ah've prayed for Joe this last ten year. Tha munna tell nob'dy, lad, but there are some of my fellow-members Ah dunna like nearly so well as Joe. If he were only converted, what a pracher he'd mek ! It's none bad prachin' he does now. He allus meks me think, lad.”

Josiah Plee turned from his comrades and the troubled streets of Minvale to his own door with the same feeling as the storm-tossed mariner when he passes over the bar to the peaceful haven of his desire. He had been married two years when the trouble began, but his grateful wonder at the miracle of wedded bliss waxed daily as his own glowing fire made him more pitiful for the wretchedness out of doors. He had been no great reader of romance, but no story of love he had heard or read was as romantic as his own love-story. To regard yearningly but unhopefully the unattainable, and suddenly to find it within his reach—such was the miracle. A girl who, to his mind, was fit in beauty, intellect, and goodness for an exalted position had—such are the wonders of love—stooped down to him and accounted it no sacrifice. In the first days of his married life a foolish feeling had come over him at times, and he had been almost afraid

to lift the latch of his door when he returned home from his work, lest he should find it was all a dream. His horn had been exalted beyond hope, and sometimes in the night he lay awake, pouring out in silence his thankfulness for the lavish blessings that had been bestowed upon him. Of him to whom much had been given much would be required, and in these silent and secret outbursts he renewed his vows of self-surrender and was ready for any great and difficult work that might be given him. This inner life and joy was completely hidden. His mates saw only the simple, pious, good-natured, but quick-tempered young fellow, and even Lemmer, who had watched him from his youth up and had done what he could to establish his faith and correct his immature views, and to whom he spoke more intimately than to others, knew little of the inner Plee.

Minvale post-office occupied one-half of Isaac Drake's stationer's shop. Isaac, a burly, awkward man, with a florid countenance and a hairy mouth, from which issued a rough, rasping voice that did him much injustice, had started life as agent for a weekly local paper. He was pushing and industrious, and from such small beginnings had steadily progressed, until now he had the only stationer's and bookseller's shop in Minvale, owned a printing establishment, and was the Minvale postmaster. He was the only professed secularist of any account in Minvale, but he was not blatant nor tried to push free-thought literature on his customers. On that class of literature, he frankly owned, he would

make a poor living in Minvale. No one even thought of suggesting that his antagonism to the Christian view had bred in him any laxity regarding the latter half of the Decalogue. His integrity and charity were known to all men; and Lemmer on one occasion, when Drake's views were condemned in his hearing, drily remarked that it was for Christians to show him he was wrong by living better lives than he did.

Katherine Dean came to Minvale from a Peak village to fill the position of telegraphist and attendant at the post-office counter. She was an orphan, living with an aunt; and Drake, who knew her father well, and respected him in spite of their antagonistic views on religion, went to the aunt, when a vacancy occurred in the post-office, and offered the post to the girl. "If she's like her father and mother at all I'm making no mistake," he said. "I can see she's got her mother's looks." It was characteristic of him that he did not look about for relatives of those who held his own negative views, but remembered the daughter of James Dean.

From the first Katherine's appearance and manners made an impression on Minvale's *élite* young gentlemen. Youth advised youth to go into Drake's and purchase a stamp or a paper, in order to examine the new girl; and the most expert judges of points in a female sublimated all enthusiasm in a phrase—she was a stunner. There was a new and absorbing interest for Minvale's young men about town.

She was moderately tall, with dark hair and liquid dark eyes, and a face that was in its modelling austere-ly beautiful. But the eyes and the mobile mouth left no impression of austerity ; they seemed ever ready to break out into a vivacious smile. It was a face of great charm, and yet it was more her refined manner and gracious bearing that attracted. Within a week four of the arbiters of Minvale fashion and form frankly confessed that the barmaid at the King's Arms was "not in it," and solemnly owned that they had lost their hearts. Lionel Penson, the heir of Penson's Grocery Emporium, Mr. Augustus Bateson, chief assistant in Yates's Drapery Establishment and the most exquisitely dressed man in Minvale, Mr. William Toogood and Mr. Adam Waterford, clerks in Mr. Slayter's works, all members of the most exclusive set, were paying court to her.

Josiah Plee, from the first time he saw her, lost himself. But he made no effort to approach her. It seemed grotesque for him, a workman with the stains of the print-works upon him, to enter into competition with the exquisites who dangled around her. For him she was only to be worshipped, hungrily but hopelessly, from afar. But there were compensations he hardly realised. Pure love is to the moral and mental man as pure blood to the body, and the vivifying current strengthens and improves every faculty. Love raised him to great heights ; he prayed often and fervently, not that she might be his—for that would have been a vain prayer, and he thought it wrong to worry God with

petitions for the impossible—but he beseeched that he might make himself worthy of her, and he thanked his Maker that He had sent her among them to rouse him to seek the fullest expression of being.

Katherine was a member of the same denomination, and it was in the chapel he first saw her on her second Sunday in Minvale. She had a fine soprano voice, and at once accepted a seat in the choir. The organist, delighted to have in his choir one with a voice and musical taste, gave her a solo to sing—"Angels ever bright and fair"—which greatly pleased the congregation and turned Plee's face white with intensity of emotion. From his seat in the body of the chapel he could watch every movement and expression of hers in the singing-gallery. Service and sermon were little to Josiah in those days; he had only eyes for her and ears for her voice, whose sweetness he believed he could detect in every hymn. He no longer looked forward with joy to the Sundays when he would be away preaching; his Sunday joy was to watch the gallery.

From the first he wondered how he should feel if she married and settled at Minvale. He welcomed all mention of her name, and yet dreaded to hear that she had made a choice. He hoped that she was engaged before she came to Minvale, and on her marriage would part from it for ever. He believed that if she went away he could live content on the memory of her.

His secret devotion influenced him in divers ways. It drove him with renewed ardour into the study of his Greek Testament and the small theological

library he had accumulated ; it made him think about his dress—he had been careless of his appearance, but now he changed every evening into his second-best suit, and his expenditure on clean collars per week was more than doubled. When the young northern workman “tidies himself up” every evening, it is proof that he is seeking converse with the other sex, and there were many witticisms passed at his expense and inquiries as to whom the girl might be. He strolled up and down Market Street and Mill Street to see if the devotion of the attendant swains was meeting with reward, but in spite of the fact that three of them had taken to attending the chapel every Sunday evening as a proof, they candidly admitted, of their interest in Miss Dean, whose one fault was her extraordinary reserve, Plee could not see that they were making progress. In a detached spirit, as he imagined, he was glad of it : none of them were at all worthy.

Chapel matters necessarily brought him into contact with her. It was a deep joy to him when she joined the same “class” of church membership, and after a time she assisted with the Band of Hope, of which Plee was secretary. On one occasion, after a committee meeting, she thanked him for a resolution he had proposed, and which after a long argument was carried. She told him how well his speech expressed the feelings of some of them. He walked home with her that evening. It was sufficient to give him three days of perfect bliss.

After that night they were on terms of friendship,

but it was always a wonder to him how he came to imagine that she regarded him differently from any other of her fellow-members. Nor could he ever satisfactorily explain to himself whence came his courage to propose. But he lived for weeks in a state of suspense that made him unfit for work or religious exercises till he felt his soul was getting in peril. One night after a Band of Hope meeting he walked home with her, and suddenly summoned up resolution to meet his fate. "I must tell you something now," he said, and spoke with the calmness of one who is in the last strait. "I shall never speak about it again, and please don't laugh at me, Miss Dean, for it is real to me, even if it seems silly to you. . . . I love you with my whole heart and soul."

It was dark, and he could not see her face; but after they had walked on a few steps she suddenly stopped, and he could see her eyes shining.

"Never speak about it again, Mr. Plee? I shall be sorry for that."

It took him a little while to comprehend what her reply might mean. "Does that mean—do you think you might love me?" he asked slowly, his face white at the enormity of his words.

She laughed softly. "You see I *am* laughing, Mr. Plee," she said. "Can't you see?"

"Caught up to the third heaven" was a phrase with which Plee was familiar, and he understood it now. For he saw.

There were a few who felt really sorry for her,

and others who, as they said, felt *quite* sorry for her, and sorry for themselves that they had misunderstood her and thought her something quite different and rather superior. She might have been the wife of a prosperous grocer's heir and had a servant and enjoyed society, or of a gentleman in a draper's establishment, a husband whose appearance would have been a continual pride. Mr. and Mrs. James Penson, the parents of Mr. Lionel Penson, had, after some deliberation, signified that they were willing for the young gentleman to become engaged to Miss Dean, Mr. Drake, in an interview with Mr. Penson, having dryly vouched for her respectability and family. But in spite of that Katherine, with a perversity that made the family doubt Drake's certificate of respectability, firmly said "No" to Lionel, and preferred a print-works "hand." Lionel could never understand how, having known him, she could decline to Josiah Plee: it was almost insulting. But doubtless her woman's intuition enabled her to see the man beneath the garb, and perhaps enabled her to divine his knightly devotion. She took the step gladly, and had no regrets; she knew she was to be envied.

When Isaac Drake heard the news he thought of young Penson and smiled to himself. He at once sought out Josiah and questioned him regarding his means. "I'm glad to hear it," said Drake, when Plee had explained his position. "Ah promised her aunt Ah'd look after her. Mind you do, my lad, or——"

“Eh, Mester Drake,” cried Josiah, “yo’ve no need to tell me that.”

“No, Ah believe yo’, or yo’d never have had her. Ah’ll tell thee one thing, lad—tha’rt lucky.”

“Ah am that,” replied Josiah, with emotion.

There was a blissful courtship of nearly four months, and then one bright August day Plee attained his heart’s desire. No such beautiful bride, it was agreed, had ever been married in that chapel—or in Minvale Church either, some added. Mr. Lionel Penson paid homage to a dream of illusion by leaving Minvale for the day. It was painful to see a pretty girl make a fool of herself.

Mrs. Plee began her married life in one of a row of poor cottages that were all in need of repair. But every woman of true refinement seeks as the first thing to make her home an expression of her finer feelings, and it was soon apparent that in No. 1 New Street lived a woman of taste. Envious and careless neighbours, while sneering at her efforts and aspirations, admitted that in a good many ways it was like the homes of the “gentry.” There was cleanliness and brightness and daintiness and fresh air, but above all the atmosphere was an atmosphere of love, which, if not more vocal, became deeper every day.

Plee’s taste had not been cultivated, and his wife had to smile at some of his suggestions; but he assisted with enthusiasm, and regarding himself or the home she had only to suggest and he cordially acquiesced. As his dinner hour, from the distance

he had to walk, gave him little time for the meal, he contented himself with a light lunch, and they had dinner instead of tea at six o'clock; and Plee, on a hint from his wife, always washed and changed his clothes before sitting down to the meal. This was aping the manners of the "quality" with a vengeance, and of all Mrs. Plee's domestic arrangements nothing excited so much comment as this.

But the critical disapproval of neighbours did not disturb the serenity within. Plee indoors dropped his dialect, and made repeated efforts to remember the aspirate; and neighbour told neighbour, with amused wonder and an attempt at mimicry, how the twain addressed each other. "Josh ses, '*Could you come here for a minute, dear?*'" and she ses, '*Yes, just wait a moment, please, love.*' It's '*dear*' and '*love*' from mornin' to neet. Ah hear they canna pass th' bread and butter a' th' table without sayin', '*Won't you have another piece, dear?*' or '*Would you like another cup, love?*' and there's allus a clean table-cloth and nice tay-things. Ah will say this for 'em—they dunna fall out; but hoo's mekkin' a grand mistake if hoo thinks hoo can keep things up to that mark if childer comes."

"That hoo canna," returned another. "Hoo's gotten some high notions, but hoo's byno means a bad sort. Hoo's willin' to do a hand's turn for anybody."

"Ay, hoo is," assented the first speaker. "Only when childer comes hoo'll find them things hoo thinks so much about now will have to go. Poor folk canna look spick-and-span wi' two or three childer—it's all very well for the rich, wi' servants

and plenty o' room. And," lowering her voice to make her remark more impressive, "Ah'll tell yo' what: hoo's none long for this world, if Ah'm any judge. Her sort, wi' clear skins and delicat' hands, dunna mek owd bones. Ah've seen it afore. My husband's sister, Jinny, were like that, and hoo went off into a decline at sixteen."

A cynical neighbour laughed. "Happen if owt happened to her, it wouldna be long afore Josh went lookin' round agen. Them young husbands as are over-fond soon get another for comfort."

"Ah hope," said the first speaker, who did not approve of this view—"Ah hope hoo'll live long, but Ah've seen her sort afore. Hoo'll go in a decline unless hoo teks great care o' hersel'. Ah'll ax owd Matthew's wife one o' these days if hoo isna of th' same opinion."

"Her and Matthew think a lot of her."

"Ay, as done most o' th' chapel folk. Well, Ah'll say this for her: with all her ways, hoo isna too proud to do a turn for a neighbour."

A sweet disposition and a kind heart win a way everywhere, and though Mrs. Plee "kept herself to herself"—or, in other words, did not gossip with her neighbours—she was ever ready to do them service. She sat up three nights with Brewer's daughter who died from diphtheria, she made little delicacies for the sick, and to her it fell to break the news to Mrs. Wall that her husband had been killed on the railway. Her goodness of heart somewhat atoned in her neighbours' eyes for her weakness for gentility.

It was not only in his appearance and manners, but in acquiring general culture, that Mrs. Plee influenced her husband. Poetry and literature he had despised as a waste of time for one who set a value on his immortal soul, and the only poetry with which he was acquainted was that of the Wesleys and other hymnologists, and his reading in prose went no further than the newspaper and such books as *Cruden's Concordance*, *Hints on Bible Study*, and similar works. But now he tried to see the beauties of Tennyson, his wife's favourite poet, and for the first time fell under the spell of Dickens in *Oliver Twist*. Whatever his wife did or thought was right, and he had to revise or abandon many of his self-righteous and narrow opinions. Mrs. Plee had hopes that he might enter the regular ministry.

It was on the anniversary of their wedding-day that Plee's cup of joy ran over. His wife had kept secret until that day that to the title of husband was to be added father. He kissed her passionately, and then stood silent and thoughtful.

"Aren't you glad, dear?" asked his wife, a little anxiously.

"So glad, my darling, that I'm nearly afraid. I can hardly believe in the Lord's goodness to me. I'm almost afraid of saying what I feel."

She smiled. "I'm sure you have no need to be afraid. If we are glad, dear, you can't offend God by showing it. David danced before the ark."

"I should have to go out and dance and shout through all Minvale if I was to show how I felt,"

he laughed. "Glad! there's no word to show what I feel—only this," and he kissed her again and again.

Nevertheless, a time of anxiety followed. She was unwell the whole period, though she hid her weakness as much as possible from her husband, and always had smiles and brightness for him. In so doing she subjected herself to what was perhaps an unwise strain, and the baby was born in sore travail. It was a puny, almost an ethereal child, and it only remained with them five days—just long enough, said Mrs. Plee to comfort Josiah, just long enough to let it feel how they would have loved it, if it had stayed. "Now it's there," she added, "we shall be more anxious to merit heaven."

To Plee the disappointment was great, but it was soon lost in his anxiety for his wife. For more than a month she lay on her bed in extreme weakness, and then for some weeks was only able to sit up for a few hours every day. But she was of a resolute spirit that no sickness and weakness could daunt. It was indeed as the doctor remarked to Plee's pastor—that he had seen many people kill themselves who had little the matter with them, and a few who had repulsed death by sheer strength of will, of whom Mrs. Plee was one of the most eminent. "Please God," she said to Josiah, "we will have another child to make up for your disappointment."

Josiah in his heart dreaded the thought of another confinement, even if a son were the outcome of it, but he answered his wife that the only disappointment and trouble was to see her ill.

"I am getting better fast, my dear," she said, with a smile and a tightening of her lips with resolution. "I would cheerfully have gone through more than this for our little Maudie who has left us. You don't know what I would endure for a living baby!"

"Don't be anxious for my sake," said Josiah earnestly. "I am more than content with you, my darling. As I said before, my cup would have been too full if——"

"But I'm not content with you, my love," she laughed. "*I want more.*"

"Then the Lord will give it to you," said Josiah, with solemn conviction.

When she was able to undertake the journey, Josiah, on the doctor's advice, sent her to Southport for ten days. She was loth to go, for it needed some sacrifice to find the money; but Josiah was insistent. The doctor again and again repeated that she must take great care of herself, and would have liked to mention that a milder climate during the winter would be beneficial, but he thought it cruel to suggest the impossible.

She returned from Southport a little better, and during the summer recovered strength slowly. Her condition was a secret anxiety to Josiah, but he persuaded himself, from a remark she let drop, that it was the death of her child that affected her, and that a living child would restore her to more than her former vigour. And meanwhile he strove more ardently to fit himself for the career of minister if opportunity occurred.

[At first he resented the strike agitation. It

would bring trouble to his wife, who was in no condition to bear it, and it caused him to think again of an old project of his to seek a freer life in the West. He had an elder brother who had gone out to the States, and was now manager of a cotton-mill, and more than once he had promised to find his brother lucrative employment if he would only come, and hinted that only a lack of enterprise could hinder him. Perhaps in a new country his wife would become strong and robust, was an argument he used to himself, when he felt he should like to cut himself free from Minvale.

But Mrs. Plee, when he mentioned it, was strongly opposed. They might think of it later, she said, but to leave Minvale at present would be a cowardly retreat from the post of duty ; it was their duty to help their fellows, to try to make life fuller and happier in Minvale, and it was such men as he that would be needed as leaders in the troublous days. It would be as noble a work as preaching.

Josiah took fire instantly. "You are right, my dear," he said, putting his arm round her. "Matthew said much the same thing the other day."

"Minvale cannot spare you just now, dear," returned Mrs. Plee. In her secret heart was the hope that he might be accepted for the ministry of his church, and she believed a great career lay before him in the pulpit. When he was deeply moved he spoke with real eloquence, though it was not always that the hidden fire was called forth.

CHAPTER XIII

A CLOUD OVER THE SUN

THAT Monday was a definite crisis in Donnimore's life. Like many of his fellow-men he had never seen Truth save through the haze of Convention, but that afternoon he saw her clearly. From one house to another he had gone, as he told Lemmer, questioning and observing, and almost in spite of himself he had to admit that, putting the question of wages on one side, many of the houses Slayter owned could only be styled slums. On the south side of the Min was a group of houses which, he learned, had been bought by Slayter, and which, to put it shortly, were indecent dwellings. Here was a plain duty for him: he must show Slayter what his duty was. He had called himself a Christian Socialist at Oxford, but it had never been more than a phrase.

He went the next morning to Adamson and told him what he had discovered. "The truth is, Adamson," he said, with a wry smile, "I'm getting my eyes opened, and I don't like the process."

"I'm very glad, old fellow—very glad."

"You will see, Adamson, that my position is one of embarrassment."

“ I see, Donnimore. The question is : How will Mabel take it ? ”

Donnimore coloured. “ If there are differences between me and Mr. Slayter it will be very unpleasant for Mabel of course, though I am sure of her sympathy. But surely he will listen to reason, Adamson ? ”

“ I hope so,” was the elder man’s reply. “ But you must see this thing through, old fellow, now, whatever happens. You have your hand on the plough, and I can see it in your face that your manhood, to say nothing of your faith, will not allow you to withdraw it. Nevertheless, I know your Irish blood, and let ‘ Suaviter ’ be your motto.”

Donnimore nodded. “ Naturally it would, considering our relations. I am going to Slayter’s office now, to see him there.”

“ I hope you may be successful, my dear fellow. Don’t mind stooping and wheedling if necessary—it is for others.”

Mr. Slayter was busy, but he would see Mr. Donnimore, was the message. Donnimore looked up at the dingy mill as he passed to the office. It struck him with a pang that he had not yet been inside the mill or the print-works, where so many of his flock passed half their days. It was a gloomy, raw day, and the rumble and whirr of the machinery and the odour depressed him. He had failed in his duty. He had been treading the primrose path, careless of those of whom he was overseer, who had to walk painfully on hard or miry ways.

“ Good morning, Donnimore,” said Slayter. “ You see me at the seat of custom. It’s the first time you’ve honoured us.”

“ It is, Mr. Slayter. I hope my visit is not ill-timed.”

“ I can spare you half an hour. I don’t keep my nose on the grindstone like I used. Draw your chair up to the fire.”

“ I am afraid, Mr. Slayter, that my visit will not please you, but you must understand that a sense of duty impels me.”

Slayter’s tone was many degrees colder as he asked, when Donnimore paused, “ Well, what is it ? ”

Donnimore noted the difference in the temperature, but he spoke courageously. “ The deputation I saw on Friday night, Mr. Slayter, told me, among other things, that I ought to look into matters myself. It seemed to me it was my duty to do so, and yesterday I visited several houses in Minvale. I went quite unprejudiced, and I’m bound to say candidly I saw many things that ought to be remedied without delay.”

“ Well, what are they ? ” as Donnimore paused again.

“ It is the condition of some of your houses, Mr. Slayter——”

“ What——”

“ I can quite understand that the matter has never occurred to you. When we see things daily for years we lose what I may call the true angle of vision. I came quite fresh, do you see, and I was struck by some of the houses. Do you know

they are in bad repair and insanitary, almost slums in fact, and the rent paid for them is out of all proportion to their value? I came to suggest that here is a matter on which you can put yourself right with your workmen. Here is a genuine grievance, and I believe if you remedied it you would have less trouble in other matters."

Slayter's veins swelled. "But I don't want to put myself right with 'em, as you call it. You don't understand these matters at all, my good fellow, as I told you on Saturday. If I did all they'd like done to the cottages I should have to raise the rent a shilling or more a week, and you'd hear the noise they'd make then! And, besides, if I built them the best cottages in England they'd have 'em worse than pigstyes in six months. I know 'em, do y' see, and you don't. And, besides, in another week or two they'll be cleared out of their houses. I've been told they're going on strike Saturday, and they'll have to clear out."

"I hope, Mr. Slayter, you'll avert this strike. Think what a calamity it will be."

"If they want to strike they shall; it'll teach 'em a lesson they want badly."

"Mr. Slayter," said Donnimore solemnly, "I appeal to you as a Christian man to avert this strike by a few just concessions. You know that you will hardly feel what it would cost you, and you would gain infinitely more in the cheerful way your people would go about their work. I must reiterate that it is a Christian's part to prevent strife and bitterness even at some sacrifice."

Slayter made no attempt to hide his irritation, and he did not seek to argue the matter. "I must confess that I did not expect this from you, Donnimore. I can't imagine what has caused you to change so much. It was only a few Sundays ago you were preaching against strikes and agitators."

Few men can bear a charge of inconsistency with equanimity, and Donnimore replied with heightened colour and on a higher note, and he forgot the word Adamson had recommended. "But I have to confess I did not stop to inquire whether your people had any grievances. I now know they have. I am not going to express any opinion on the present rate of wages, for I don't know enough about the matter; but I think you can see it was bad policy to promise an increase when trade improved and not give it. And if you would only endeavour to look at the question of the cottages in a detached frame of mind you would see that they ought to be improved without delay. They are not, to speak candidly, the houses of a Christian landlord. I know it seems weak and undignified to yield, but it is the most courageous thing to do. Send for these half-dozen men now, Mr. Slayter, and let us discuss the matter once more and see if we cannot patch this breach. They are not unreasonable men, I assure you. I have been talking to Lemmer, who, notwithstanding he's a Dissenter, is a sober, sensible man. I am certain they will meet you half-way."

"My wife and Mabel will be very disappointed with this, Donnimore. It's outside your province altogether. It isn't a clergyman's duty to make strife

and encourage the working classes to make strife. Mabel, I know, will be very troubled about it."

"Let us leave Miss Slayter's name out of the discussion, please," retorted Donnimore coldly. "I am doing all I can in the interests of peace and just dealing. Come, Mr. Slayter, shall we have these men in and try to settle it? We shall be all the happier for it."

"Now, look here, Donnimore; it's perfectly useless to go on like this. I've heard more from you on the matter than I should from any other man. I've told you already you don't understand. I've a duty to my brother factory-owners, and I'm not going to play the traitor. Let me ask you once for all to let this business drop and attend to your proper work in the parish. There's a lot to be done. There's a sad amount of drinking in this place, and I'll back you up as much as you like in temperance work. We'll talk over another time about having a temperance mission here. I know a first-class missionary, and we can have a good rousing time this winter after my hands have come to their senses. I give 'em a fortnight before they come asking to be taken back again."

Donnimore rose. It was with difficulty that he kept back the stinging retorts that were in his mind, but he saw he could prevail no further. "I won't hinder you any more, Mr. Slayter," he said, in a constrained voice.

"Don't mention it, my dear fellow; glad to see you at any time. You wouldn't care to look round the mill while you are here, I suppose?"

“Not now, thank you ; I must be going. Good morning.”

“Good morning, Donnimore.”

The millowner laughed angrily when Donnimore had gone. It was plain to him that the young fellow had been getting too much under Adamson's influence, but he would give Mabel a hint to talk to him.

Donnimore went away with angry strides. How could such a man be Mabel's father ? And then he fell into a gloomy reverie. What influence would the strike have on his relations with Mabel ? If he played a man's part in the coming warfare and acted according to his convictions, what would be the consequences ? Play the man, he must—he would be degraded for ever in his own eyes if he failed ; but he did not realise until that moment how profound was his love for the girl. Life would be a burden too intolerable without her, and he saw shrewdly enough that Slayter would not be above using his daughter's happiness as a lash to bring him to heel. His hope was in the girl herself, and that brought him contentment. He would get her to use her influence with her father and avert the coming crisis.

When he reached the vicarage he sent a note to Mabel, asking her to take a walk with him that afternoon on the hills. A bracing breeze had sprung up, and a walk on the hills he felt sure would clear his brain.

Shortly after two Mabel met him, and his heart leaped as he saw her coming, a vision of radiant

maidenhood. "I was going visiting," she said, with a laugh; "but my lord called, and his slave is here. I have felt lately I was meant to be an Oriental. What is the business, my lord?"

"We'd better leave it till we've climbed Wyatt's Lane," said Donnimore. "But the chiefest business of all is to tell you that I love you."

"So you have told me before, my lord," dropping him a curtsy, and adding in a sobered tone, "It is my breath, my lord."

"This is a new love," said Donnimore gravely, "born to-day and added to all that has gone before. I love to say, 'I love you, Mab.' There is magic in it."

On the ridge Donnimore unburdened himself. "I saw your father this morning, dear, and he is terribly disappointed in me."

"What, again?" she asked lightly. "He told me last week he was. I assured him I was not."

Donnimore sighed. "Thank you," he said. "I want to talk to you on the matter, dearest. I saw him this morning, and he is more than disappointed now—he is angry. I had to do my duty, and it was difficult, as he is your father. I want to tell you what has occurred."

She listened in silence while he tried to make his position clear. "I was bound by my office as a clergyman, do you see, Mab," he said in conclusion, "to speak out, and I believe, even if I had no *locus standi* in the matter, I should have wanted to say something."

Mabel's tone seemed chilling to Donnimore's ear,

which was acutely listening for every intonation. "Well, you have told him, Frank, and you can't do any more. Some of the houses are dreadful, I know; but it is the people who make them dreadful. They love dirt, some of them; and dad will never give way now they have threatened to strike. Their wages are good enough, if they used them properly. Don't say anything more to dad about it, Frank, or it will make matters very unpleasant. It might upset him till he took a dislike to you, and then what would your poor Mab do?" and she laid her hand on his arm.

It was a chilling douche for Donnimore. When the knight, strung up to the pitch of derring-do, is about to enter the lists he expects to see admiration and approval in the eyes of his ladye-love, not a suggestion that he is a little foolish.

"But I am afraid you don't understand, dearest," he said, gently taking her hand in his. "As your father's daughter it is natural you should see as he does. But I can't. I should deserve to be unfrocked, dearest, if I did not try to do my duty as I saw it. Mab, my darling, you must learn to have sympathy; you have looked with unsympathetic eyes on these Minvale folk so long that you cannot do them justice. They were promised a rise in wages, and it is a breach of faith not to give it them. They spend money foolishly, but so do we all. I gave ten pounds a short time ago for a dog, but I should not like the Minvale men to say that my stipend ought to be reduced because I was wasting my money. And as for their houses, they are

entitled to something much better for the rent they pay, and they can't leave them, because there are no others in the village to go to. They are not all dirty and careless ; I was in the house of Lemmer, an elderly man, and it was a picture of neatness and comfort."

"Frank dear," she said, rather sharply, "you must not take the part of these people against dad. Even if you do think they are in the right don't tell him so, or—or—— Dear, you don't know dad. If you offended him greatly he would forbid me to see you again, and then what should I do ? "

"My dear, my dear !" cried Donnimore, with deep feeling, "nothing or nobody can come between us, I hope, for I love you with my whole heart as you love me, and nothing can come between us so long as we love one another. Many waters cannot quench love nor floods drown it, but if you had contempt for me it would be as effective as anything to kill your love for me. Contempt and love cannot exist together, I am sure."

"Contempt ? " cried Mabel.

"Yes ; if I were untrue to my convictions and duty sooner or later I should merit your contempt. Don't you see, *ma belle*, that I cannot be a man and purchase your father's approval and a smooth path for myself by immolating my convictions ? I should know I had sold myself for ease—and vainly, dear, for ease I should never have again."

"Yes, but why interfere, dearest ? " asked Mabel, in perplexed impatience. "You can feel that papa is not doing right, but why make any bother about

it? You have done your best to make him look at the matter differently (though I must tell you, Frank, I don't agree with you about it), and why do or say anything more? And another thing, papa is inclined to be rather obstinate, and if you interfere further it will make him more obstinate and determined to have his way."

"My dear," replied Donnimore, "it is because I am a clergyman that I cannot stand aside and keep silence. A few weeks ago I took your father's side, but I have seen things for myself, and I know now that he is not doing right. I believe he knows it himself, but he thinks it would be humiliating to give way in the least. He too, you know, is one of my flock, and it is my duty to admonish him and prevent him doing wrong if possible."

"But he doesn't believe he is doing wrong, I am sure," said Mabel, with irritation. "You see, he knows everything about business. He has been in it all his life, and he thinks it would be wrong to yield."

Donnimore shook his head. "If you put this matter before a jury of unprejudiced men they would not agree with him. He broke his promise as regards wages, you see. He speaks at temperance meetings of the brewing interest making wealth out of the miseries of men. He is making money out of their wretchedness by the houses he provides for some of them."

"I don't know what will be the end of it all," said Mabel, with a despairing accent.

Donnimore linked his arm in hers. "I want you

to be an ambassador of peace and right, my darling. You have great influence with your father ; use it in the interests of peace and right-dealing, darling."

"I will, as you ask ; but don't you see my sympathies, generally speaking, are with dad ? I never did and never shall like these Minvale people."

"Never is a great word, *ma belle*. I like them much better than I did, and if I go on at this rate I shall soon love them. I hope I may. I am coming to see that failure must be written right across a clergyman's life if he does not really love his flock. You know, dear, a strike is little better than civil war, and no man can foresee the end. Help me, dear, to obtain peace."

"I'll do my best, Frank," she replied ; but her tone was flat and dispirited. She could not understand how her lover could deliberately seek to bring discord into their love-song.

By mutual consent the subject was dropped, and by efforts they raised a conversation on parish work. But both felt that the sun was not shining, and before they reached Minvale again they were walking along with great patches of silence.

Donnimore would have been indignantly incredulous if any one had suggested that he had spoken priggishly. In spite of healthy-mindedness and being blessed by the beneficent fairies with a little of that inestimable gift, a sense of humour, he had not altogether escaped that besetting sin of the man who is in earnest and who seeks to transform human nature. He really believed he was altogether free from the taint, for he had once

remarked to Adamson that it was the peculiar vice of the most worthy of the clergy, especially the earnest young curate. "I always say, Adamson," he added laughingly, "that it is the effect of the clerical garb. I know many decent young fellows who seem converted instantly into solemn prigs directly they don their coat and collar," at which Adamson smiled and said nothing.

Donnimore did not see Mabel again until the Friday evening, when she was at the schoolroom training the Band of Hope children for a concert. She had only opportunity to whisper a few words to him. "I have spoken to papa twice," she said, "but it has done no good. He is very cross with you just now."

Donnimore smiled. "Thank you," he said. "You have sown the seed; who knows how and when it will germinate?"

CHAPTER XIV

THE CAMPAIGN OPENS

ONE o'clock on Saturday came, and Slayter's employés left his works with cheers for the strike. Matthew Lemmer looked on with a saddened face. "Ah wish they wouldna," he said. "It's nowt to shout about."

"Let 'em cheer, owd mon," said Brinton. "They winna be cheerin' next week, Ah reckon. Ah hope Sam can hear 'em. We shall pull through, Matthew. Stopport folks will help us, and t'other places round. We mun have a meetin' to-neet. Shall it be at thy house or mine, Matthew?"

"Come to mine," said Lemmer.

"All reet; six o'clock then. By gum, lads! the feight's begun. Howd on a minit; Ah'm goin' to cheer too, for Ah love a feight, as yo' know," and Brinton waved his cap and cheered. "Theer! Ah feel better. Ah'm goin' whoam now to eat a good dinner. Who knows when th' next'll be?"

On the Monday it became known that Adam Bentley had given notice that his mill would be closed on the following Saturday. All understood

what that meant ; the masters were sticking together and meant to render it impossible for Bentley's employés to assist the strikers. And, as was expected, Mr. Slayter's tenants had received notice to quit their cottages at the week-end. Minvale was at war, but it was passive war. Men lounged about the street corners or took a walk together, women revelled in their freedom, and it was a real luxury to lie in bed morning after morning until one felt inclined to get up. It was also economical, for in bed appetites slumbered also.

During the week a young man of thirty, named Waterhouse, arrived in Minvale and reported himself to the strike leaders. He had been sent from Stockport to give them a few days' assistance in organising the campaign. He spoke quietly and seemed very unassuming, and Slaithwaite growled that they might have sent a man while they were about it ; but before the week was over they were all ready to acknowledge that he had " got his head screwed on reet." Waterhouse, who afterwards rose to play a great part in the labour field, was a visionary who kept his idealism in subjection to the practical, and was always insisting that talk and bluster and misdirected enthusiasm distracted men's minds from the real work of the campaign.

He directed affairs with unceasing vigilance. He cordially acquiesced in the policy not to take notice of the demand to leave their houses. " You'll not be out of them for some weeks," he said quietly, " and it will take Slayter some time to evict all of you. It is nearly time this man's domination came

to an end. How you have stood it so long I can't imagine."

"We were hopin' things would mend o' theirsels," said Brinton. "It's th' easiest way o' gettin' things mended Ah know. All yo' do is just sit still and grumble and swear when yo' talk about th' mester." Brinton paused and then added, "By gum, chaps, Ah never thowt about that!"

"About what?" asked Slaithwaite.

"When we've won this strike, whatever shall we do when we've nowt to grumble at? It's bin a real pleasure to some o' us to grumble and cuss and mek Sam an excuse when we had a bit on a horse-race or a bowlin' match and lost it, or got too much liquor. What shall thee do, Bob, if we win—thee and Abram Shinding? Yo'd better go out in th' wet and get rheumatics or a bad back or summat o' th' sort ready."

"What about theesel'?" asked Slaithwaite, in his usual manner.

"Ah shanna be behind, lad. Ah shall mek it an excuse as Ah've got such rum mates to work with. When me wife finds fault Ah shall say, 'Tha owt to have to work with Bob and Abram near thee and tha'd know.'"

This was received with laughter, and even Slaithwaite smiled. Waterhouse looked at the speaker with sudden interest, and he instantly appraised Slaithwaite and Shinding. He knew what committees were, and knew that a strike committee is, as a rule, the most difficult of all bodies to manage. It was a favourite saying of his that the proletariat

would never take its place till a dictator arose who would impose his will on all, though, he was wont to add with a laugh, it would be necessary to remove him when his work was done.

The noblest and most altruistic emotions of the mind have often an obscure, mean, or base origin. The stately palm and the lovely rose have fed on decay and corruption, and the meaner passions of the soul may give life to the highest. It may be an insignificant obstacle, a boulder, a fallen log, in the rivulet that determines whether a noble river shall reach this ocean or that, and in the earlier stages, before ossification has set in, the course of man's thoughts can be turned by apparent trivialities. We can mark it most plainly in the domain of politics and sectarianism. A dislike to certain persons or some minor measure is the obstacle. The dissatisfied protests vehemently that he is unchanged, but insensibly he begins to subject his whole mental position to examination, and finds he cannot really defend this position and that, that there is much to be said for that view which hitherto he had hated, till the whole mental attitude is changed. In the case of many men neither a change of political view nor a change of sect is apostasy. All of us are trained from childhood to certain opinions which form a citadel against the obstinate questionings of the world. Buttressed by tradition, and fortified by environment, convention, and prejudice, the position is regarded as impregnable. But let a breach be made in the defences, and

gradually the whole position becomes untenable, though the defender may protest in good faith, even when everything is tottering, that he is secure behind his bulwarks. It is not until these barriers are broken down that men have to fight for their opinions, and until that comes to pass no man has found himself. A vast part of mankind passes from birth to death without knowing that their opinions are not convictions. It is in the nature of things that it is the latter who jeer at those who have to undergo the shock of battle, and call them cowards and apostates.

In the first week of the strike Donnimore was in the throes of conflict. It was, although he never knew it, and would have indignantly denied it if any one had stated it, solely his dislike to Mr. Slayter that made the first breach in his defences. The reader has seen that when he went to Minvale he held very much the same opinions regarding the social fabric and the place of the manual worker in it as Slayter held, but the millowner's manner, by rousing his antagonism, set him to examine his whole position, and had the most marked influence on his character. Nothing appears more probable than that, if Slayter's manner had not been so provocative to a man of Donnimore's sensitive disposition, the latter's views would never have been brought to the bar, and he would have passed through the strike sympathising indeed with the wretchedness around, for such was his nature, but with a feeling of resentment against the men who had wantonly increased misery and provoked

disorder. As other men in like circumstances he protested, to himself and others, truthfully, as he believed, when his whole defences were crumbling around him, that all was well with him, and in his own mind he fixed that afternoon when he had gone from house to house, noting the lack of sanitation and comfort, and in some cases even the ordinary decencies of life, as the beginning of his new relation to the world. But he had visited some of the houses before and had seen nothing ; the difference was that now he had vision.

These, of course, were not the loftiest emotions ; but viewed from the standpoint of the cause it matters little what induces a man to join an army if he fight selflessly. Some high souls are in the ranks from the purest patriotism, some in defence of personal interests, others because they came of a family of soldiers and fighting is their trade, some from mere love of excitement. But if a man bear himself bravely in the conflict and do mighty deeds we cannot stop to inquire whether he is patriot or hireling ; he is helping to plant the banner on the enemy's citadel.

Donnimore smiled wistfully as he recognised, when he had taken stock of himself, that without a doubt he had veered to a real sympathy with strikers whom he had denounced not long before as pernicious agitators. He had met the agitators face to face, and learnt how ludicrous was his condemnation of Lemmer, Plee, Brinton, and Bricknoll at least as the conscienceless, dissatisfied type of man he had had in his mind. Nevertheless, it was an

unkind buffet of fortune that the strike had come at this time. He had been walking in a rose garden in the sunshine, and he had been called from it to a grey, misty world in which there was no gladness. He never for a moment doubted Mabel's love; but he knew Slayter by this time, and every action of his that was in any way sympathetic to the strikers would be regarded as a personal affront. Hunger, like a dreaded guest, would soon begin to creep from house to house; and his office, if not his humanity, called upon him to relieve the wretched and visit them in their homes. Mr. Slayter would assuredly interpret that as the action of an enemy, and if he went further—and he could see no other course open to him—and actively took the part of the men it would be beyond pardon. Other men might maintain a neutral attitude; he knew enough of his own temperament to know that that was impossible. Mabel was infected with her father's views; it was a dreary situation. His manhood was about to be put to the test, and it is only the philosopher who can face the ordeal with serene forehead.

Supposing Mabel obeyed her father's commands and broke with him? He gasped as this view struck him. But he passed it by at last. The thought was unjust to her; the worst Slayter could do was to defer their happiness. Mabel was his, and must be his. He prayed mentally that the burden might not be made too hard for him, and that done he went to his table and wrote to Mr. Slayter. He began by saying that he thought a

letter would serve better than an interview, in which they might get heated. He begged the mill-owner to consider the whole business afresh, and put it to his conscience whether he was acting in a Christian manner, and then went on to say that in this unhappy strife, knowing that the strikers had grievances, he had, after long and painful cogitation, decided that it was his duty to support them in their demands. He could not, as a man, to say nothing of his office, see them starving without doing all that was possible to relieve them, but he was afraid his convictions would carry him further, and he should have to give them passive and perhaps active support. He hoped, he wrote in conclusion, that Mr. Slayter would do him the grace to acknowledge that it was not perversity, but duty and conscience, that had brought him to be an opponent, and once more he begged the master to rid himself of a grievous responsibility by offering some compromise to his people. Donnimore played with his pen for some minutes before he added as a final sentence that what was taking place and what might take place would make no difference in his feelings regarding Mabel, but so long as these unhappy differences continued he would not visit The Hollies without invitation.

Mr. Slayter found the letter beside his plate when he came down to breakfast, and he gave voice to the wrath that was seething. "Here! read that," he said, with purple face, tossing the letter over to his daughter. "If the fellow isn't out of his mind he's a rogue, and unfit for his position."

Mabel read the letter with a flushed face but chilled heart, and handed it back to her father in silence. She would, if she could, have escaped from his presence until he was cooler. She had been greatly disturbed by Frank's peculiar views, but she had not believed he would go so far in eccentricity. She felt indignant with him that for some quixotic notions he was steering her happiness near to the reefs.

"Well, what do you think of that?" asked Slayter, with an ominous smile.

"Oh, I'm deathly sick of the whole thing, papa," she cried angrily. "I hate Minvale and the mills and everything connected with it. Why don't you sell the works or turn them into a company and let us live somewhere at peace? I'm sure you get no satisfaction out of it. Don't hesitate, papa; go to Manchester to-day and begin making arrangements for selling. It would save mamma's life, too—a change of scene," she added artfully.

Mr. Slayter waved his hand impatiently. "What do you think of Donnimore is what I want to know?" he demanded, with another tide of wrath.

"I'm sorry, papa; it seems so silly, of course. But, do you see, as a clergyman he thinks that his religion calls upon him to side with the poor."

"His religion!" cried Slayter, flapping the letter on the tablecloth. "Nice sort of religion! He's a disgrace to his cloth. Except Adamson there isn't one of the clergy about who won't say so when

they hear. He made a mistake ; he was cut out for a Dissenting parson. That's the way to keep the Church together, isn't it ? I'm his churchwarden, and you are engaged to him, but it doesn't make any difference, it seems. He's either a lunatic or a scoundrel."

"I shouldn't take any notice, papa. In a week or two he will probably see that he has made a mistake. He doesn't know Minvale like we do, do you see ? He's making a mistake, but he really does feel just now, I am sure, that he's only doing his duty."

Mabel's tone was as gentle and pleading as she could make it, but it was an irritant to her father. "Not take notice ? I shall take notice. I shall write and tell him that it's the end of everything between us. If he's a grain of sense left he'll clear out of this parish at once. It's like his impudence to say it makes no difference about you. He'll find his mistake."

"Papa," cried Mabel sharply, "don't talk like that, please. He thinks he is acting from the best motives, and—and I love him, you know."

Mr. Slayter put down his knife and fork. "In addition to everything else, is he teaching my own child to disobey me ? It's on a par with everything else, I suppose."

"I am not disobeying you, papa. That I love him you know very well, or I should not have become engaged to him, and I want you to remember it and not be too bitter. You think it hard, I dare say, that Frank is against you, but nothing"—

with a hint of tears—"in this horrible strike is as bad for you as it is for me."

But Mr. Slayter was not to be softened. He had the failing of all men who hold sway over others, and looked upon the suggestion of opposition as monstrous and defiance as treachery. For his own vicar and prospective son-in-law to announce in cold blood that he was about to aid a set of rebellious ingrates in defying him was like being stabbed in the house of a friend.

"I should hope," he said, in his most magisterial manner—"I should hope that he is not so lost to all sense of honour as not to break off the engagement. Never with my consent will you have any relations with him."

"Papa!" she cried sharply, "I have begged you not to discuss the matter now. Have you no regard for my happiness?"

"My dear child, it is regard for your happiness. You could not be happy with a man of such principles. *He* has no regard for your happiness, it is clear. Never, with my consent. I should"—and for the moment Mr. Slayter was a reincarnation of Pecksniff—"I should fail in my duty as a parent if I entrusted my daughter's happiness into—into such—such keeping."

Mabel could bear no more, but got up abruptly and left the breakfast-table. In her own room she relieved her feelings a little by tears. A few weeks ago her world was a perfect circle—now it was shapeless. She tried to hide her distress from her mother; but a mother's eye can see far, and in

a few minutes she was kneeling by the invalid's side, showing her, without reserve, all the misery the strike had brought her.

Mrs. Slayter sighed wearily during the tearful recital. Her burden was more grievous than her daughter's. During the night sleep had not visited her, so heavy was the burden of Minvale. A strike with all its miseries, with men stirred to angry passions, with pale-faced women and starving children, wrung her gentle heart as if in her would be concentrated Minvale's agony. And to this the morning had added her daughter's unhappiness. Her hands quivered at her impotence, and for almost the first time since her breakdown she felt rebellious. If she had only been able to take her place as peacemaker!

"My dear," she said, "I am sorry, but you must keep a good heart. Don't become petulant, dear. It will, I hope, make your love burn brighter—this adverse breath."

"Yes," cried Mabel tearfully, "but you know what papa is—he prides himself on keeping his word. You know how obstinate he can be."

"Hush, my dear. He is angry now; in calmer times he will not be so inflexible."

"I don't know. I believe he really hates Frank now, because he was depending on him. And, mummy dear, what makes me so miserable is losing my perfect confidence in Frank. If he had loved me as—as I thought, really and truly loved me, he would not have done this, unless—unless we were married, and then it wouldn't have mattered."

Mrs. Slayter smiled. "That might have been expedient, my dear ; but how worldly in a clergyman ! I should have trembled for your happiness then, my dear."

"I don't know if all the men are alike, but he is as obstinate as papa. He said that in the long-run I could have had no respect for him if he had yielded to papa, but I can't understand such notions—to me it seems utterly stupid and childish, and—and he has the satisfaction of knowing he has made me utterly wretched. It seems to me," with a doleful sigh, "I always shall be."

"What of Frank himself, my dear ?" asked Mrs. Slayter. "Do you think these differences are costing him nothing ? Do you doubt his love ?"

Mabel answered after a little hesitation, "No, I suppose not, but—I suppose——"

"Don't you think he is suffering also ?"

"Oh, I believe he is, mummy, but he can't be suffering nearly as much or—Do you see, his mind is filled with other things—the strike, for instance. He hasn't the time to feel unhappy—or to think of my feelings."

"My dear, if you truly love each other this distress can only be for a short time. Believe me, when you look back on this you will love him more for his courage and steadfastness. I don't doubt for a moment that he has been sorely tempted to play a coward's part. You said his mind was filled with other things. Well, my dear, if you want to deaden your own pain forget yourself in thinking of others. Think of the miseries of the

poor women in Minvale and the little children, Mab. They will be crying for food and comforts. Imagine what my feelings would have been if, when you were a baby on my knees, I had to listen to you crying for food and had none to give you. Oh, Mab dear, it will make demons of some of the most gentle of them."

"Why, mummy dear," said Mabel, patting her mother's hands, "I believe you sympathise with the Minvale folks and not with papa."

"I think your father, my dear, because he has allowed prejudice to warp him, is being hard and unjust. It is not because he is a hard or unjust man, my dear, but because he has become blind with prejudice for the time. Prejudice is the worst form of moral blindness, my dear. He can only look upon them at present as thankless and dissolute. And I am afraid you are prejudiced too, my dear. You see, it has become a fixed opinion with him that we are conferring benefits on them by allowing them to work for us, whereas, of course, they are benefiting us as much, or more, as they believe, for they do not think they are paid sufficient. I want you, my dear, to cultivate a truer human sympathy, or you may become hard of heart, my dear."

Mabel sighed and said nothing more. Self-centred, she could not see her mother's sufferings, and left the bedroom more angrily impatient with her lover. She would adopt a cold attitude to him if she met him; he should see by her manner that she did not approve of his conduct or his views. He could have disapproved of her father's actions

without quarrelling with him ; it was his duty as a clergyman to be neutral. He wasn't—he wasn't advancing the cause of religion by his action ; he was embittering strife instead of allaying it. But none of these reflections brought any comfort ; the times were out of joint, and she was being made to suffer most undeservedly.

She was seated at the piano as she made these reflections, and, an idea striking her, she returned to her mother. "Mummy," she said, raising a smile, "if you would like to go to Blackpool for a week or two I will go with you. Papa would be glad to have us off his hands just now, I feel sure."

Mrs. Slayter shook her head. "I cannot go in this state of affairs, dear. I have been wishing that I were able to go out and do what I could to soften angry feelings." And then, after a pause, she added wistfully, "If only my daughter would take my place !"

Mabel said nothing, but went to her room and wept a little. Even her mother had no real sympathy with her.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE CAMP OF THE REBELS

FOR ten days the workshops had been silent, and already Minvale had begun to feel what a strike meant. Its own strike fund was only sufficient to carry on the warfare for a fortnight, and, though help was coming in from Stockport and the other cotton towns, the hastily-formed union was not affiliated with others, and the contributions were more compassionate allowances than supplies for a campaign. It was Minvale's battle, and not a contest between the forces of labour and capital fought on Minvale soil, and it was plain to the most inexperienced that the pinch was going to be very severe. Even the elements were fighting on the side of the master. The strike had begun in mild, open weather, but the wind was now coming from the north and north-east, and was a carrier at times of snow, sleet, and icy rain. The roads were deep in black mud, the gusts of rain and sleet had no mercy on the workless and half-starved, who loafed through the streets and lanes. But discomfort brought no weakening ; they were more determined than ever not to yield, though many of them had miscalculated, believing a fortnight's strike would

bring Slayter to his knees. They had paid no attention to the demand to quit their cottages, and now notices of ejection had been served on them, and it was rumoured that Slayter and Bentley were about to import alien labour into the village.

"They'd none better come here," said Mrs. Bricknoll, who was as big-framed and stout as her husband, but with an incongruously mild voice and demeanour. "Sam's no need to think we're goin' to stand that in Minvale."

"That we winna," said Mrs. Dean. "And there'll be fine doin's when Sam tries to turn us out of the houses, mark my word. He'll have to chuck us out if everybody feels the same as me."

"Ah reckon he's nobbut tryin' to frighten us," said another woman. "He wouldna have the face to try it—this weather and all."

"He's face enough for owt," said Mrs. Bricknoll. "However, them as lives longest'll see most, and Sam'll see two-three things afore he dees."

Meanwhile, Donnimore was throwing himself with temperamental energy into the work of softening the wretchedness of his flock. He had provided a soup-kitchen, which was kept going entirely out of the pockets of himself and Adamson, and he spent his days superintending the making and distribution of the soup and passing from house to house on a mission of sympathy and cheerfulness. Every hour his admiration grew for these sturdy and determined folk who faced cold and hunger so bravely. The strike, he told Adamson, was worth a great deal to him, for it had enabled him in a week

or two to get nearer to the hearts of his flock than in years of peaceful times. "A fine folk, Adamson! They are as independent now as though they were prosperous; the one or two who are deferential, I can see instinctively, are the ne'er-do-wells of the village. Unpolished they may be, but at any rate they don't toady. And they are beginning to confide in me too, Adamson."

"That's a splendid certificate for you, old fellow," said Adamson, with a smile. "Wear it as an ornament about your neck."

Insensibly, Donnimore had begun to see more and more with the eye of his flock, and day by day his interest in their cause and its success became more passionate. If asked, he might have said that he still objected to strikes, but in practice he was heart and soul with the strikers. Nor was his devotion to his flock wasted. For a few days they had accepted his co-operation coldly, fearing that his sympathies lay more with the master than themselves, but gradually they thawed and were unfeignedly glad that he had come to their aid. It was help they learned to value. "Eh, that young passon!" said Brinton to a group of his comrades, "him and us have changed our minds about one another above a bit. He goes into th' houses with a smile and a laugh and a joke, and in two-twos he has th' women wi' long faces laughin' too. It does more good than a pocketful o' hawf-crowns Ah can tell yo'. He tells 'em to try and raise a smile when their husbands come in, for us poor beggars need it. And, by gum! some of 'em do, and it

often lasts till he comes round next time. Ah couldna have believed he could have found his feet in th' time. It's worth summat, tha knows, Matthew."

"It is that," said Lemmer earnestly. "Ah were readin' a while ago as a certain general were reckoned as worth two regiments when he took the field, and th' passon is worth summat, lad. God bless him! Ah wish——"

"Tha wishes yo'r Methody passons 'ould lend a hand. Dunna let that upset thee, owd mon; th' wonder to me is we've got one at all to feight on our side."

"Ah've heared," said Bricknoll, "as Sam's dowter has thrown th' young passon o'er."

"It's about reet," said Brinton. "Ah'm sorry for him if he were fond o' her, but all th' same he's well out o' it. Hoo's a chip off th' owd block."

"Hoo's none like her mother," said Boothroyd. "Ah dunna care who hears me—Sam's wife is a good soort."

"Tha'rt reet, lad," assented Brinton; "th' only dacent one among th' family has to lie on her back all her days. Ah'll lay any odds hoo's none too well pleased at what's happenin'. But never mind; th' young passon's on our side, and he's worth summat, as Ah said."

Once or twice a day Donnimore looked in at the committee rooms to hear how affairs were progressing and to give his advice, and he made a point of being present at the meetings that were held almost nightly on the Wakes Ground. Lemmer

and Brinton had asked him to speak, but he declined for some time. When, however, he saw that the struggle was going to be long and desperate he yielded.

"My friends," he said, "Mr. Lemmer and Mr. Brinton think I might do some good by telling you that you have my sympathies in your struggle. I have to confess that I was very much averse to a strike in the first place, as some of you know, but when I had seen things with my own eyes I felt bound to take your side, though I did all I could to avert the strike by trying to get Mr. Slayter to take a proper view of his responsibilities. My friends, we must not disguise from ourselves that this will be a hard struggle, and if we are to become victors every man and every woman will have to do their part. It will only be won by sober, steady, persistent effort. Above all, my friends, whatever the provocation, there must be no violence. Very shortly, I am afraid, you will be turned out of your dwellings and an attempt will be made to bring other workers into the town. But you will defeat your own cause if you become violent. I know how difficult it will be to keep calm, but it will be your duty, and, please God, before the spring comes there will be better times before us all in Minvale."

They cheered him ; hunger and rebellion had not yet roused their passions. Matthew Lemmer followed him and dotted the i's. He was very thankful, he said, that they had a passon in Minvale who was fighting the people's battle. Nothing in the

whole bad business had pleased him like that, and he felt heartened by it. He was glad to say a hundred pounds had come in from Manchester that evening, and if they remained steadfast and calm and resolute the victory would be theirs.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MASTER ATTACKS

BUT another week passed by, and those who had prophesied that at Christmas they would be rejoicing in Minvale had lost heart. Some of the irresponsible had begun to see for the first time how great were the forces arrayed against them, and not a few, if they could have acted individually, would have given up the struggle and gone back to work. To them the strike was a sensation, and when the novelty had gone and there was grim want to be faced their hearts failed them, and in subdued mutterings they began to find fault with their leaders. It was easy for Matthew Lemmer, for instance, well-to-do as he was, to act so big and talk so big. None of the discontented knew that Matthew's savings were nearly gone, and Mrs. Lemmer, with secret tears but a spirit as indomitable as her husband's, had marked which articles of furniture should be the first to go. She never entered the parlour but she was filled with a glad emotion at the sight of the organ. They had not spoken about it again, but it was tacitly understood that the other furniture was to be sold before that.

One dark Wednesday morning at seven o'clock when the sleet was falling intermittently there was a knock at Westcott's door, which was the end house in what was known as Min-view Road. Neither Westcott nor his wife were up, for they had learnt that when food is scarce and wretchedness great, sleep is the best substitute for one and anodyne for the other. Westcott did not rise until the knocking was repeated again and again, and then, partially dressed, he came down grumbling and opened the door to the officers of the law. He was to be the first victim of the evictions.

"We don't want to give you any more trouble than we can help," said the officers, "but we have to clear you out. Get your wife and children out of the way as quickly as you can."

Westcott stared stupidly at them. "My wife isna up yet," he said at last.

"Then get her up quick. We'll wait ten minutes for you, but no longer."

Without a word Westcott went back and roused his wife, who stared at him helplessly. The blow had been expected, but now it had fallen it crushed them.

"Dunna let 'em in, Dave," she said tearfully.

"Dost' think, lass, Ah can stop 'em? There's nine or ten of 'em. Tha'd better get dressed quick and go in Mrs. Kay's wi' th' childer."

Crying, Mrs. Westcott did as she was bid, and her husband helped her to take the three children into Kay's. Then he went off hurriedly to tell the news to Lemmer and Brinton.

“Dunna tek on, Annie,” said Mrs. Kay. “Ah’ll have brekfus ready in ten minits. We’ve got a bit o’ tay left, Ah’m glad to say, and it’ll warm thee.”

“Ah—Ah’ll go and have a look to see they dunna break nowt,” said Mrs. Westcott.

“Ah wouldna,” returned Mrs. Kay. “It’ll only mek thee feel bad.”

“Ah’ll just have a look for two minits and tell ’em to be careful,” was the answer ; and, with her shawl over her head, Mrs. Westcott stepped into the street. A gust of sleet met her. Already the chairs, table, dresser, and “coast-chair” from the living-room were in the street, and with celerity the articles from the scullery were being brought forth.

In an instant Mrs. Westcott was a raging being. With a scream she rushed to her belongings, and, picking up the poker in one hand and the tongs in the other, made for the doorway. “Let them things alone, will yo’ !” she cried, with a pant. “Let ’em alone, Ah tell yo’. The first man that touches another thing Ah’ll kill dead.”

A policeman was near the door and he tried to soothe her. “Come, missis,” he said, “go away quiet. It’s none our fault ; we’re only doin’ what we have to do. It’s none work we’re fond of, but we have to do it.”

“It’s cowards’ work, yo’ great lump !” she cried, whirling the poker. “The first man as brings out another thing had better never to have been born,” and she thrust at her interlocutor with the tongs, causing him to jump back with laughable celerity.

It was ludicrous, but a woman in an irresponsible



SHE LUNGED AT HIM WITH THE TONGS, . . . AND HIS COURAGE FAILED.

fury is a terror, and the men dared not face her. They tried to soothe, then threatened, but when one man more daring than the rest tried to issue from the doorway carrying the rickety scullery table as a shield, she lunged at him with the tongs and swung the poker at his legs, and his courage failed. By this time not only the street but most of the village had been roused by the news, and there were at least three hundred people looking on. Some laughed and cheered, others cursed, a few women wept, while some stood in silence with knitted brows, which was the most dangerous demeanour of all.

“Well done, Annie,” shouted Mrs. Dean. “Dunna let ’em do it, the rogues. It’d serve ’em reet to duck ’em in th’ Min.”

Other women shouted encouragement, but Lemmer intervened by persuading Westcott to go and endeavour to lead her away. “It’ll do no good, tha knows, Dave,” said the old man, “and it meight get her in jail. Let’s keep th’ women out o’ trouble if we can, lad.”

“Ay, stop her, Dave,” said Plee; “tha’d never forgive theesel’ if hoo got locked up. Tha knows they’d have no mercy on her.”

A little reluctantly Westcott went and tried to persuade her. He was joined by Mrs. Kay and another neighbour. Again and again she declared that she would inflict mortal injury on the rascals, but quite suddenly she collapsed, and suffered them to lead her away, her passion spending itself in a violent fit of weeping.

After that the crowd witnessed the work in silence.

"Ah'll tell thee what, owd mon," said Brinton suddenly, putting his hand on Lemmer's shoulder, "there'll be a hell o' trouble afore this business is o'er. If they were shoutin' or cursin' or owt o' th' soort it wouldna matter so much, but they're sayin' nowt now. It shows they're thinkin' hard. Why didna we wring Sam's neck last time he went through th' works? Ah'm feared some necks'll be wrung by Jack Ketch afore it's o'er."

"We mun do all we can to mek 'em patient, lad," returned the old man, with a touch of weariness. And then he put his hand on Brinton's shoulder. "Eh, lad, Ah wish tha'd pray too."

"Nay, nay, Matthew," said Brinton, with a smile. "None me! If Ah started prayin' Ah should be axin' Him Up Above what He were showin' so much favour to Sam for. No, owd mon, dunna get me agate o' prayin', or Ah should soon be cursin'. Thee and Josh and th' young passon can do all th' prayin' as is needed, Ah reckon. Hello! they're goin' to begin on Waterman's house now."

Westcott's had been dismantled and the door locked, and the officers were moving on to the next house. Mrs. Waterman was a tall, thin woman of sixty, who was differentiated from her neighbours by never wearing a shawl on her head, but always a bonnet. It was forty-two years since she had come from the north of Shropshire to the neighbourhood, and the bonnet was the one touch that still marked the alien. She stood beside the door with her arms

folded and invited the evictors in. "Ay," she said, "come and do your dirty work. Ah'll tell yo' one thing—there isna one o' yo' as winna be glad afore yo' dee for a place to shelter yo' ; and when the time comes think on my words. Yo' can go in ; yo'll have to answer for this when owd Sam's name winna save yo'."

They made no reply, but it was plain some of them felt very uncomfortable. There is nothing so disturbing to the uneducated mind as a prophecy of doom. "It isna our fault, missis," said one of the most disturbed in a conciliatory tone.

"Who made yo' come ? " asked Mrs. Waterman. "Say that when you hanna a bed to dee on, and see what good it'll do."

The evictors went about the work in a subdued mood, Mrs. Waterman, with her arms still folded, watching them in scornful silence. The crowd had trebled by this time, but there were no demonstrations. Donnimore came up as they began on the third house. It was not until he saw the thing in being that he fully realised what eviction meant. His hands quivered as his indignation rose, and he only nodded in reply to the remarks of Lemmer and others who stood near him.

It had been proposed to evict all in the row of eleven houses that morning, but the officer in charge, with the street almost blocked with the crowd, thought it wise to desist for the day. He spoke to the other tenants, telling them that he must visit them on the morrow, and begged them as a personal favour to remove their goods that day.

"We don't like it," he said in defence, "and it would be a lot better if you would flit quietly."

"Nay," said one, "yo'll have to turn us out. We dunna want to rob yo' o' a job yo'll be proud of as long as yo' live."

"Ah'll tell yo' what to do," said Mrs. Waterman. "Go to Sam's house, and turn him and his stuff out. Yo' meight get forgiven then."

As quickly as possible the officer and his party moved away. It was his intention to begin early the next morning in another part of Minvale, hoping to get the work done without so many on-lookers. In its present temper any small incident might turn the crowd to active hostility.

As soon as they were gone Brinton mounted on a chair of Waterman's. "Well, folks," he said, "Sam's begun. It's plain he means business. Well, so done us. If he thinks this'll put our tails betwixt our legs he's made a grand mistake. Ah've only one word to say: keep your bottom lip up, 'specially yo' women, for it comes harder on yo'."

Donnimore followed him on the chair. "Just let me say," he said, "how proud I am to see how peaceably you have submitted to these forcible methods this morning. I am more thankful every day that Providence has placed me where I can witness such a display of calm fortitude. My friends, we shall triumph, be assured. It will be difficult at times to keep our bottom lip up, as our friend Brinton expresses it, but when the fight is over life will be better worth living in Minvale. I

am now going to assist in finding lodging for our friends who have been turned out."

The next morning the officers began their operations at Collier's Row, but again the Minvale folk gathered in a few minutes, and in rather a less patient mood. The second house to be attacked was Bricknoll's, and Bricknoll stood at his door while his neighbour was being evicted with a grim-set mouth and a sledge-hammer in his hand. He had tried to send his wife out of the way, but, afraid for her husband, she refused to go. "Dunna, Tom," she kept saying; "Ah'd rayther they burnt it all than tha should get into trouble. Tha'rt one o' th' committee, tha knows."

"Thee go away, Ah tell thee," was Bricknoll's angry reply. "Go in Mrs. Somers's, and keep in. It'll mek thee feel bad to see thy things chucked in th' street."

"None as bad as to see thee in trouble. Ah shall stay as long as tha does."

"Wilt' go away afore Ah mek thee?" asked Bricknoll, with grim temper.

"No," said the mild woman. "Tha'll have to hit me wi' that hammer afore tha hits anybody else."

Fortunately the rest of the committee came up before Bricknoll was put to the test. Brinton saw everything at a glance. "Come now, put down that hammer, Tom, or lend it me a bit for a coal hammer," he said. "This isna th' sort o' example for thee to set. If tha begins wi' sledge-hammers other folks'll be playin' wi' guns and knives. Nay, lad," as he noticed Bricknoll's grimness, "we canna

win this feight wi' hammers. Put it down, Ah tell thee, and come wi' me."

"Ah winna," replied Bricknoll sullenly.

For answer Brinton began taking off his jacket. "Tha'd better put it down, lad. Ah winna believe tha'll feight me with a hammer, but Ah reckon Ah'm ready for thee, hammer and all. Tek off thee jacket."

Bricknoll smiled, then laughed. "Have it thy own road, Joe," he said, yielding. "Though Ah felt like smashin' somebody this mornin'."

"Ah know, lad. Ah do too. Ah even felt like smashin' thee. Nowt 'ould please Sam better than for two-three to get locked up. Tha knows who th' magistrates are too. All reet, mother," to Mrs. Bricknoll; "these youngsters' yeads soon get hot."

Bricknoll and two others were evicted without further incident. The next house was Shinding's, and to the surprise of all it was passed by.

"Hello," said Brinton, "they arena touchin' Abram's! What's the meanin' of that, done yo' reckon?"

"Summat dirty, Ah reckon, but we'll find out," returned Bricknoll. "Wheer is he? Ah havena seen him about this mornin'."

"Ah seed him go indoors a while since," said Bob Slaithwaite.

"Come on," said Brinton, "we'll go and find out. Done yo' know Ah've had me doubts o' Abram for some time. He's none bin grumblin' enough lately to please me. If Abram isna findin' fault yo' may reckon he's playin' dog's tricks."

Shinding opened the door to the three men. He looked very uncomfortable.

"How's this, Abram?" asked Brinton. "What are they lettin' thee alone for?"

Shinding had been trying for more than a week to tell his colleagues that he had forsworn the strike. Now was his opportunity, but as he looked into the faces of his comrades and at the crowded street behind them his courage failed.

"How should Ah know?" he asked, with feigned irritation. "Ah were havin' a mouthful of breakfast, expectin' 'em every minit."

"Funny they should pass thee by—one o' th' committee," said Slaithwaite.

"It's a mistake, Ah reckon. At any rate it's nowt to do wi' me."

"Abram," demanded Brinton sternly, "art thee in Sam's pay? By gum!" as a thought struck him, "were it thee as carried tales to Sam?"

"Me?" cried Shinding, trying to hide his tremors. "It were thee, Ah and a lot moor allus reckoned."

Brinton laughed grimly. "Ay, everybody knows it were me. But look here, lad, we're goin' to get to th' bottom of this. If tha's been standin' in with Sam all this while, when we were thinkin' tha were straight, tha'd better skedaddle, lad, while there's time. Dunna say tha hasna been warned."

"Tha'rt a big mon in thy own eyes," retorted Shinding, with simulated passion. "Thee look after theesel'. It's a mistake, Ah reckon; they'll start on me to-morrow."

"Ah hope it is, for thy sake, Abram," said Brinton.

"Only, dunna mek any mistake ; if it's thee, cut away, lad, while there's time."

Shinding with vindictive emphasis told him where to go, and shut the door with a bang.

"Ah'll bet my last ha'penny it's him," said Slaithwaite.

"We'll find out," said Brinton, and going up to the evicting party asked why they were not clearing out that house, pointing to Shinding's ; but the only answer he could get was that he was in the way, and it was no business of his.

At the next house but one there was a diversion that for the time made the crowd forget its anger. Mrs. Pallart was a big woman, in the prime of life, tall and stout and strong. She had sent her husband, whom she dominated, with the children to her sister-in-law's at the other end of Minvale, on the plea that she wanted to pack some of her belongings decently and needed a clear field. As soon as her husband was gone she locked the door and awaited the enemy at her bedroom window. When the officers knocked at the door and called loudly for admittance they received for reply a bucket of water plump on their heads. It took them by surprise and they slipped out of the way, and incidentally entertained the crowd. A peremptory order, and they returned to force open the door. Three bucketfuls of water drenched them, and then a big paper bag of soot dropped on their heads and nearly choked them. But the door was forced at last, and then was passed round the news that Mrs. Pallart had made a fortress of the bedroom and

had blocked the stairs with mattresses, bedding, and all the heavy articles she could use effectively.

When they had dismantled the ground floor the invaders tried to take the staircase by storm, and, while they were thus engaged, Mrs. Pallart appeared at the window and asked in low tones for a ladder to be brought. Everybody was willing to oblige, and while the invaders were forcing a passage on the staircase she escaped by the window, to be cheered by the crowd. Two more houses were cleared out, and then operations ceased for the day.

CHAPTER XVII

MABEL VISITS THE REBELS' CAMP

BUT the most significant events of the day occurred at The Hollies. Mr. Slayter had convinced himself that when his hands saw that he was determined they would yield ; a few evictions, he told Bentley, would bring them to their knees in double-quick time. He had carefully hidden his designs from his wife, but that morning, while Mrs. Pallart was diverting her neighbours, a garrulous maid-servant, who was dusting in Mrs. Slayter's bedroom, spoke of the lively incidents down in the village. The girl was from the pastoral part of the county and affected to despise the people of Minvale. "It's true, ma'am, isn't it, that master means to turn them all out ? Serve 'em right, too, ma'am."

Mrs. Slayter let the girl finish her dusting before she spoke, and then it was to ask that Miss Mabel might be sent to her.

Mabel came at once. "Why, mummy dear, what is it ?" she asked in alarm, when she caught sight of her mother's face. "Are you feeling worse, dear ?"

Mrs. Slayter shook her head. "Is it true, my

dear, that the people are being turned out of their homes, and with violence ? ”

Mabel looked vexed. “ Has Charlotte been talking to you, mummy ? A silly girl, to distress you ! We kept it from you, do you see, because we did not want you distressed. It isn’t very nice in this weather, but papa gave them proper notice, you know. But they defied him and wouldn’t leave peaceably.”

“ Oh, my dear,” cried Mrs. Slayter, raising herself up, “ you cannot speak of it so lightly as that ? My dear, to be driven from your home in the depth of winter. It is terrible ! And,” with a sob, “ it is our doing.”

“ There, mummy dear,” said Mabel soothingly, “ I do wish for your own sake you had not heard. To my mind the whole business right through is terrible, and I don’t know who is to blame, but, at any rate, you are not, dear. Why does not papa sell the works and retire ? He can well afford it. It is so stupid to have all this worry when there is no need. He looks ten years older from it, but he is as obstinate as the people themselves. It is something in the air of this filthy village, I think—it has affected Frank too. But don’t trouble, mummy dear ; you have made yourself quite ill. I was quite alarmed when I came up.”

“ My dear,” said Mrs. Slayter, whose emotions had induced acute physical pain, “ promise me one thing : you can take what view you like of the strike, but you cannot, my dear one, let the little ones and the women suffer and perhaps die of starvation

without doing something. You know I have money of my own. You can draw on me if you will till it is all gone. Only do something, do something, dear. It is terrible ! ”

“ What will papa say ? ” objected the girl.

“ He will not forbid you to be humane, my dear. You are wronging him if you think he could really be so hard as to allow the innocent babies to suffer when you could relieve them. I will talk to him myself. He is not in now ? ”

“ No, he went to Manchester by the early train, you know, but he will be back at five.”

“ I must see him then, my dear, but go and do something to help these poor creatures. If you cannot do it for yourself do it in my name.”

“ But, mummy, they are so incensed against us that I don’t think they would take anything from my hands.”

“ Try, my dear,” said Mrs. Slayter, more faintly. The effort had been too much for her, and she fainted.

Mabel had not been in the streets and lanes of Minvale since the strike began, and she had never allowed her imagination to dwell on what Minvale rusting would be like. By striking its inhabitants had been responsible for her unhappiness, and her previous lack of sympathy had in the last few weeks deepened into something that was near hatred. But now, stirred by her mother’s intense feelings, she had begun to reflect. Her whole view of life had been coloured by her want of sympathy with these folk who were toiling in order to live a life that at the best was sordid, and whose toil helped to

keep her in comfort. Minvale was ugly and depressing, but instead of awakening her sympathies it had prejudiced her against those who were so unfortunate as to live there. Donnimore had stirred her a little, but her prejudices had not been overcome. After she left her mother's room she went to the garden to reflect. If she did as her mother desired, what sort of a welcome would Minvale give her? Insult her in the streets, most probably, and refuse her admittance to their houses. With a few exceptions they had always received her coldly, even when bearing gifts, but she failed to perceive that it was her want of sympathy that had repelled them. She had bestowed "charities" freely, and at times indiscriminately, but she had never given a particle of herself, and Minvale rightly had no gratitude. To the common view it was receiving grudgingly and as a favour from the daughter's hands what it deserved as a right from the father.

She did not lack courage, and the thought that the Minvale opinion might be that she was afraid to venture in its streets brought her to a decision. She put a few pounds in her pocket with the intention of giving an order to the local grocers to supply the most necessitous cases, and protected from the beating rain by waterproof and umbrella she marched with proud head towards Minvale. Nevertheless, she sighed with relief when on the bridge over the Min she came face to face with Donnimore. He was walking with bent head and did not see her until she was abreast. "Mabel!" he exclaimed.

"Good morning, Frank," she responded, holding out her hand. And then her eye noted his haggard face and weary air. "Why, Frank," she said, with deep concern, "you are ill?"

He smiled and shook his head. "No, dearest," he said, "a little tired, that is all. I have no time to be ill, no matter how much inclined I felt to giving up. But where are you going, may I ask?"

She flushed a little. "Mamma was greatly upset this morning when she heard that some of the tenants had been evicted, and insisted that I should come down and see what I could do on her behalf. Strictly speaking," she added, so that he might not mistake her attitude, "I am but mamma's deputy."

"At last, my dear—at last!" said Donnimore, with some emotion. "I have been praying that your heart—no, not that, but that you would open your eyes and sympathise with the misery around."

She replied with as much dignity as she could assume. "You forget, Frank, what my relation is to these people's employer."

Donnimore shook his head and spoke with a touch of his pulpit tone. "No, dearest, I do not. But I cannot believe that even Mr. Slayter is so ruthless that it is part of his policy that the little children should starve. Their angels always behold the face of the Father, and what answer shall we be able to give for their sufferings?"

His tone caused her to reply with some spirit: "Papa would say it was not his fault—that the men should have taken their children's sufferings into consideration."

"Yes, I know," replied Donnimore, in more natural tones. "I suppose every man justifies, or tries to justify, his evil—his shortcomings and mistakes to his own conscience. The pity is we can so easily justify ourselves to our conscience. But you, dearest, are not going to justify the starvation of little children, nor the starvation of any one in Minvale, I know. What are you going to do this morning?"

"I—I hardly know, Frank. I thought of going to Goodman's and Ferry's and asking them to send some necessaries to the worst cases."

Donnimore smilingly shook his head. "No, dearest, that would be dodging your conscience. Would you like to come with me?"

"Oh, I should, Frank; I am glad I met you."

He was determined to spare her nothing. He took her first to the soup-kitchen and showed her what they were doing to cope with the distress, and then he led her from house to house. He pointed in silence to the empty houses in Min-view Road and elsewhere, and then took her to the upper part of the village where evictions were then in progress. She shrank close to him as they came near the crowd that was looking on, but he led her forward. As the nearest caught sight of her they whispered to each other, and soon all were gazing in her direction. Murmurs arose, and presently some one asked in a loud voice, "Has Sam's dowter come to see how th' work's gettin' on?" "Ay," called out another in reply, "it's a nice bit o' fun for her, Ah reckon."

Mabel heard it, and her face flushed slightly, but

she made no remark. Donnimore raised his hand to the crowd, and no further remarks were shouted for Mabel to hear, though there were truculent mutterings regarding her, until one woman asked, "Hasna he given her up then?" and they fell to speculation regarding the relations of the twain.

Donnimore led her through the street to visit the Seddons, with whom were living the Lakings who had been evicted, and the Seddons themselves were expecting to be dispossessed in a day or two. Mrs. Laking was nursing her baby, which was cutting its teeth with difficulty, and her two-year-old son was lying on the coast-chair exhausted after a fit of whooping-cough. Mrs. Seddon moved about the house wearily. Her time of travail was only a few days distant.

Both women smiled as Donnimore with a slight knock at the door walked in with a cheery "Good day"; but the smile faded and they became dumb when they saw who was with him, and Donnimore had to ask her to sit down. With one hand he stroked the child on the couch, who smiled back at him, while with the other he gave a little packet of tea to Mrs. Seddon. "I ought to have brought you something more nourishing," he said, with a smile. "But there is nothing like tea to cheer a woman, is there?"

"Thank yo', sir," said Mrs. Seddon, and Mrs. Laking nodded her thanks.

"But you have no fire?" he said, looking round.

Mrs. Laking glared at Mabel and spoke fiercely. "No, sir; there's a bit o' coal left, but Kate's

time'll come this week, and Ah made her save it till then. It'll be wanted then."

"You must have a fire now," said Donnimore; "you will feel twice as cheerful with a fire and a cup of tea." He took the baby from the mother's lap and placed it on Mabel's. "Make a fire, please, Mrs. Laking. Miss Slayter will nurse the baby while you do it."

Mabel blushed. Mrs. Laking looked fiercely at her, and her hands went out as though to snatch the child from her. She turned on Donnimore. "Kate will howd her a bit, sir," she said. "Ah'd rayther hoo did."

"Mrs. Seddon had better rest," said the vicar, smiling.

"Ah dunna want her in any Slayter's hands, sir," she cried stubbornly, looking at Donnimore. "It's their fault hoo's badly [ill]."

Donnimore spoke gently but authoritatively. "Miss Slayter has come into Minvale this morning, Mrs. Laking, to do what she can. She cannot help what is happening any more than you can."

Mabel's first impulse was to hand the child to Mrs. Seddon, but that was succeeded by a desire for mastery. She rose from her chair with the baby in her arms and approached Mrs. Laking. "I'll give her to Mrs. Seddon if you wish it," she said, in calm tones, "but I should like to hold her for a little while. See, she is quite content; she is smiling at me. Or if you would like to take her I will make a fire."

"Ah canna help it, Miss Slayter. Ah mun speak

as Ah feel," was the answer, in a less harsh tone. "Happen it isna your fault, but yo' dunna know how we feel."

"No; I know you are feeling bitter, but this strike is causing me great trouble too."

"Ah dare say it is. Well, Ah'll get the fire laid."

At that moment there came a hurried knock at the door, and Bricknoll's son put his head inside. "If yo' please, Mester Donnimore, fayther and Mester Lemmer want yo' to come this minit down th' street," he said, with a gasp for breath. "There's a big row at Mick Mullins's house, and they're feart murder'll be done."

Donnimore turned to Mabel. "Stay here, please, till I come for you," and without waiting for a reply he hurried out.

Mullins, as his name betokened, was an Irishman, though born in Lancashire. He was a happy-go-lucky man of thirty-five, who had spoken with fine scorn of the orderly instincts of his neighbours who had allowed themselves to be evicted so easily. They wanted a few of his friends from the old country, he said, to show them how to stand up for themselves. Failing that he would give them a lesson himself. His neighbours appraised it as mere boasting, and appraised it wrongly. That morning he sent his three children to a neighbour's house, and he and his wife set to work to fortify their dwelling against assault.

When the evictors approached Mullins, stripped to his shirt and with his sleeves rolled up, looked out on them from a bedroom window. "Kape

away, ye rogues," he cried. "This is my house, and I haven't invited any of ye here. Take yourselves away or some of ye will need new limbs on your body and new heads on your shoulders."

"Come now," said the officer in charge, "act like a sensible man. You are resisting the law and you'll only get into trouble."

"Resisting the law," retorted Mullins. "What do I care for your law? I came from Ireland, where we be not afraid of a thousand like ye. Get away, my fine man, or you'll get sariously hurt."

"Open the door, my man, or we shall break it open."

"Try!" was Mullins's grim reply. "You'd better send for the docther before you make a start, for ye'll want him if ye don't kape away."

Three of them, at the word of command, flung themselves against the door, but recoiled with cries and curses. From the bedroom window Mrs. Mullins flung a jugful of boiling water on them, and one of them was severely scalded in the neck and shoulders and had to be led away to the surgery. "That's the start," laughed Mullins, and his wife, leaning from the window, cursed them with the comprehensive maledictions of an Irishwoman.

There was no laughter now from the crowd that stood around. This was not horse-play, but grim combat. One or two shouted words of encouragement. Mullins waved his hands contemptuously. "I'll show ye how to act like men," he cried.

Brinton and Boothroyd were looking on and tried to intervene. "Look here, Mick," said Brinton,

approaching the house, "this is all very fine, but it's a dozen or fifty or a thousand to yo' two. Mek th' best of it, lad, and let th' devils have their road this time. We'll mek Sam pay another road."

"Go to blazes, ye pore bhoy; it takes an Irish bhoy to show you the way," yelled Mullins, who was beginning to see red.

"If tha will be a fool there's no help for it, Ah reckon," retorted Brinton, "but, any road, send thy missis out of it."

Mrs. Mullins in reply threatened Brinton with the boiling water. "All reet," said Brinton, putting his hands in his pockets, "go yo'r own way, but Ah tell thee, Mick, Ah wouldna give a brass farthin' for a man as mixes a woman up in such business. It shows, in spite of thy mouth, tha'rt a poor sort," and he walked away, followed by curses from the pair.

"Mester Donnimore went into Seddon's a while ago," said Boothroyd. "We'll send and fetch him. Happen he can mek him see sense."

"All reet," returned Brinton. "But Ah dunna think his own praste, even if he threatened to send him to purgatory, 'ould mek him see sense just now. He's feightin' mad, and when an Irishman's at that pitch yo' meight as well argue with a railway ingine."

Before Donnimore could reach the spot the contest had become grim. The door was battered in, but it was only the first of the entrenchments of the besieged. With a chest of drawers and tables and mattresses, which was all the furniture there

was left, they had made a barricade round the doorway, and behind it husband and wife were fighting desperately and recklessly. One of the attackers had been placed *hors de combat* by a blow from a table-leg which Mullins was using as a club, and others of the party were painfully bruised. Mullins was bleeding from a deep gash over the right eye, and Mrs. Mullins, with disordered hair and bare arms, was assisting him by throwing water into the faces of the besiegers, lamenting loudly that it was not boiling.

Donnimore, when he came up, asked the officers to step on one side while he parleyed with Mullins. They were glad to do so, but Mullins was fighting mad, and paid no heed. He didn't care if he got ten years in gaol, he cried ; he would send the devil some of his children that morning if they tried to get in.

Donnimore tried next to reason with Mrs. Mullins, but she was more excited than her husband, and told him to take himself away—they wanted no heretic parsons near them. There was no help for it, and Donnimore withdrew. He would have liked to drag Slayter to the spot and show him what he was doing.

The assault recommenced, and Mullins fought with greater fury. They dared not try to rush him with that terrible weapon in his hand, but at last one of the police resorted to strategy. A ladder was fetched, and Mrs. Mullins rushed upstairs to repel invasion by the bedroom window. But that was not how it was to be used. Three of them took

it and pushed it steadily at Mullins's breast. He dodged on one side, but that enabled two of the party to enter the doorway. Mullins retreated to the stairs, which he held with his wife's help for some time ; but two of them holding a table as a shield enabled one of the others to seize his legs and throw him down. Even then he fought desperately, but he and his wife were at last seized and handcuffed.

The crowd watched them brought forth from the house in silence. Two or three hundred followed them on the way to the lock-up. Suddenly the cry was raised, " Let's save 'em, lads ! "

It was the psychological moment. In a trice all restraint had been swept away, and the two policemen who had them in charge were fighting against a crowd of maddened men and women. They dealt lusty blows with their truncheons, but they were helpless against numbers. Their prisoners were snatched from them and hurried off into concealment.

Their blood heated with excitement the crowd turned back to Mullins's house, and with stones and brick-bats drove " Sam's hunting-dogs," as they had nicknamed the evictors, away.

The answer of the authorities was prompt. Twenty extra police were telegraphed for, and a warrant was issued for the arrest of Michael and Mary Mullins.

With a heart sick with indignation and grief Donnimore went back to Mrs. Seddon's. Mabel was still nursing the baby, but the women held her at arm's-length and only replied to her



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remarks by monosyllables. They could not even feign cordiality to a Slayter.

With a word of cheer to the women Donnimore led Mabel away. In the street he told her what he had just witnessed. "I am much afraid their restraint has given way," he said. "I hope not, for their sakes, but I cannot wonder at it. It is hard to be patient when hunger grips not only yourself, but your loved ones, dear."

Mabel made no reply, and he took her again to the soup-kitchen, where food was then being distributed. At Donnimore's suggestion she assisted in the distribution. Although it hurt her she could not withhold a smile when she noted how they would manœuvre that they might not receive the food at her hands. One or two would have gone without it had she not sent Donnimore to bring them back.

When the distribution was over Donnimore went with her towards The Hollies. "I cannot do better for mamma, Frank, than hand you her money for the soup-kitchen."

"I shall be glad to take what you can give me, my dear—our funds are getting very low. . . . What do you think of it all, dearest?"

She looked him in the face. "Frank, I am sick of it all. It is like one of those bad dreams in which you feel you cannot escape some horror. I tried to look at these people this morning with your eyes. I feel very sorry for them—I could not understand till I had seen for myself. But you know," wistfully, "mine is a difficult position, Frank."

"It is indeed, dearest," said Donnimore with

feeling, "but I am sure you can surmount the difficulties if any one can."

"I must try. I cannot believe papa can understand this misery, or he would not, at least, turn them out of their houses at this season. Even if he is in the right I can't see how that is necessary, and it is certainly cruel. But he has become very bitter and unreasonable. You know he forbade me to speak to you; he wanted me to cut off all relations with you, but I would not yield to that. Oh, Frank," she held out her hands to him beseechingly, "it is so difficult to do right; help me."

"I'll try, dearest," taking her hand.

"It was mamma that sent me down here this morning. Her heart is wrung, I know, as it always is, at the thought of suffering. She cannot see, but she can imagine. How is it my imagination is so defective?"

"You must sympathise, my dear; let there be sympathy and everything else follows. But you must not blame yourself. I am no better than you. I looked with cold eyes on my flock some weeks ago, and I believe I was in danger of disliking them because their agitation would breed trouble for me. Thank God, I escaped that deterioration of character. We must remember, we must feel they are as ourselves—some are better than I am. Some of them are the noblest men and women I have ever met. What do you think of Lemmer and his wife? They have been a careful, thrifty couple, I am told—indeed, I can see they have—and have considerable savings. He gave me soon after this affair began

ten pounds for the soup-kitchen on condition that I never mentioned it. And yesterday I discovered accidentally on visiting the Billets and Watermans that he has been helping everybody. I should think his nest-egg must have nearly gone. On Wednesday I happened to call at his house at noon, and found him and his wife and daughter sitting down to dry bread broken in tea—tea-sop, it is called, I believe. That afternoon, as delicately as I could, I spoke to him about his savings going, and he smiled, and said he was only a steward, and he could not have believed spending money could make a man so content with himself. I have heard that phrase about being a steward of wealth till I detested it as nothing more than cant; but then, my dear, it sounded beautiful. It is such men as Lemmer who are fighting your father. Do you think I can doubt who must win? Lemmer is a Dissenter, and so is Plee, but some of my own particular flock are like a draught of strong wine to me. There's Ingham, who had the impudence—as I thought at the time—to speak to me about my sermon on agitators. He is working like a hero. He has tramped more than a hundred miles every week since the strike began, they tell me, passing from house to house asking aid for his fellows in money or goods. He has collected over fifty pounds in money alone. And his wife has gone to Matlock, where she was born, and is collecting there. This is no strike of wastrels alone, my dear; earnest Churchmen and Dissenters are equally determined."

Mabel said nothing ; her anchor had dragged that morning.

"Oh, dearest," cried Donnimore, "banish your prejudices. You have a tender heart, I know, or," with a smile, "it would never beat for me. If you hold aloof from your fellow-men in disdain, *ma belle*, you are starving your heart. Sympathy is like love and jealousy—it grows by feeding on itself."

It was difficult for a girl to keep what her father would have called a cool practical view with such an enthusiast assailing her. "I'll try for your sake, Frank," she said, in a low voice. "But in the circumstances it is not easy. Whatever I do I shall create pain and trouble."

"I know, *ma belle*, what difficulties you have to face. But you have a mother who will help you."

"Yes, Frank. I often wish I were more like mamma. I suppose, really, one cannot help one's character. I drew part of mine—I did not get all my character from mamma, I am afraid."

"Your mother is one of the best women I have ever met," replied Donnimore, with fervour. "But don't think, dearest, I am fault-finding. I think you have been looking on the world from a wrong point of view. If you have any faults I love you the more because of them, I suppose, for I could not love you more were you—well, an epitome of all the virtues and graces. Nor as much, I am sure. I am quite confident you get your character from your mother, and your prejudices from your surroundings."

He took hold of her arm and turned her round with him. "See, Mab, there is Minvale. You

have often asked me to look down on it actually and metaphorically. Well, dearest, no place could be ugly where so much stoutness of heart and heroism and self-sacrifice are to be found. What you see from here is the crust ; beneath it are lovely things, and some foul things to be made less foul. But you must go below the crust."

"I am going to try, dear. . . . I have been very unhappy ; it seemed to me as if everything was conspiring against my happiness. I felt hurt because I thought in being at cross-purposes with my father you had no regard for my feelings. I have been very unhappy."

"Poor Mab !" said Donnimore tenderly.

She left him with brightened face and a more alert manner. The talk with him had heartened her ; she felt she could face her daily life with more courage and less irritation. When she reached the house she went at once to her mother's room. Mrs. Slayter was still pale and exhausted after her fainting fit, but she was eager for news.

"Oh, mummy dear, it is terrible !" said Mabel. "I met Frank, and he took me to see his soup-kitchen and into some of the houses. And they were trying to turn out Mullins, the Irishman, and his wife, and they were fighting. Both Mullins and the police were hurt—it is a mercy no one was killed. The police took them at last, and then there was a riot and they were rescued. I wish papa would stop it all. I believe, mummy, they thoroughly hate us."

"What did Frank say ?" asked Mrs. Slayter quietly.

"He believes it all wrong, of course, mummy, and he was telling me what sacrifices some of them are making. He feels sure men of that sort are certain to succeed. I wish I could feel the same as you and he do, but I do think it unnecessary and harsh to turn the people out of their houses. Frank thinks it is my want of sympathy that prevents me. Oh, I don't know, mummy, but everything is wrong! It seems to me that papa acts according to business—political economy, he would call it—and doesn't take people's feelings into account. Don't you think that is it, mummy?"

"Your father has convinced himself he is right, my dear. It is lack of sympathy."

"I wish we could persuade him to see for himself. You can hardly wonder at their hating us when you see their misery. Papa, of course, would say they had brought it on themselves, but that does not explain all. They would say it is papa who has brought it on them, but anyhow he would end it, I am sure, if he would go and see it. I shall speak to him about it this evening, mummy. I shall tell him that I must try to relieve the sufferings of the children. I will coax him, mummy—you know how I can coax him sometimes."

Mrs. Slayter nodded again. Mabel was learning.

"I feel less miserable, mummy, now I have spoken to Frank. I told him how unhappy I had been, and how I thought him—well, a little inconsiderate. I can't see now that he ought to have taken part in the strike, but as vicar he could not stand idly by and let them suffer."

"I shall die well content, my dear, knowing you have won the love of Frank."

"Oh, but you are not going to die yet, mummy," cried the girl, with an accent of alarm. "Why, half my happiness would be gone if you could not see me a wife. Why, I should not know what to do if I could not come to you for advice."

Mrs. Slayter smiled. "I should like to see you a happy wife and mother, Mab. But go and get your lunch, child; it is long past lunch-time, and Kate dislikes it kept about."

"All right, mummy; but you won't make yourself worse by brooding over it, will you?"

Mrs. Slayter smiled and shook her head. She was glad Mabel did not know what pain it had brought her.

CHAPTER XVIII

INTER PARES

IN Manchester Mr. Slayter believed he found the sympathy which his own household denied him. He had never been popular among his brother employers. There were other self-made men among them, some of bluff manner and little refinement, but without that self-complacent assertiveness that irritates in all classes of society. As one of the blunt members of the Exchange put it: "Slayter always raises my bristles." He might be the owner of Minvale, and a shrewd, prosperous man who had made his way by the hard-headedness that Lancashire admires, but there were men among them who were owners of more than Minvale. At home he might be absolute lord; here he was only one of the crowd, and by some he was not even recognised as an equal.

When the agitation began he went among them with added importance. Some confounded agitators, he said, were giving him trouble, but he would break them, crush them. He was going to show how agitators should be dealt with. His tone implied that he was capable of giving them lessons in inflexibility, and was on that account resented,

The younger section were inclined to poke fun at the terrible happenings at Minvale.

"Hello, Slayter," said Horridge, "how's that little affair of yours progressing? Brought your crowd to their knees yet?"

"They're giving me a lot of trouble," Slayter responded importantly. "To make matters worse, my vicar has poked his nose in the business and encouraged the agitators. I'll tell you what, Horridge, some of the younger clergy want teaching their place."

"Do they?" asked Horridge.

"Yes, they do, my dear fellow. I told my vicar plainly that he didn't understand business matters, and he'd no more right to interfere than I had with his sermons and that sort of thing. However, I let him try his hand, and he saw the ringleaders, but he could make no impression on them, as I well knew—they're too pigheaded for that."

"Must be something in the air up there that makes for pigheadedness," interposed Pederton flippantly, with a wink at the group.

"I'll own it was foolish of me to let him interfere, but there were er—domestic reasons. However, I hope he'll see now he'd better stick to his proper sphere. I sent notice of dismissal to the ringleaders, and gave them a week's notice to clear out of the houses. I'll turn the lot out before I'll be beaten."

"Bravo, that's the spirit," said Gorely. "You've got the advantage of us there, Slayter; you have been artful and no mistake."

"I made Minvale from top to bottom," returned Slayter proudly. "Bentley's acting with me. If my hands go out on strike he'll lock his out. I am going to settle this business once and for all."

"That's right, old chap," said Pederton. "We look to you to hold the fort, you know."

When he turned away from them to an older group the young fellows mocked. "Slayter seems to think that one-horse village of Minvale is the hub of the universe," said Horridge. "It must be a detestable little hole. Evidently he is a sort of Almighty Czar there."

Pederton assented. "I've passed through it a few times, but a view from the train did not fill me with yearning for a closer acquaintance. All the same, Horridge, I hope Slayter nips the thing in the bud. It won't do for that sort of thing to spread just now—we had trouble enough four years ago."

"If you and I were Slayter's hands, old fellow, it strikes me our normal condition would be one of strike," laughed Horridge.

When Slayter discussed the situation with the older and more sober members they were practical. "What are you paying, Slayter?" asked Mortimer Moss, a great Blackburn manufacturer.

Slayter rather reluctantly told them.

"Um," said Moss, with a look round the group, "that's low, you know. We're all paying more, I believe."

"I am, I know," said Jenkinson, another self-made

man. "If your Minvale were near us, Slayter, you'd have had a heap of trouble before this."

"Yes, but do you see," said Slayter, "they are tenants of mine too, and their rents are practically nothing. I made the place from top to bottom. All the money in Minvale has been made out of me."

"If your rents are so low I suppose you make it up to them that way," said Moss dubiously. "But if I were you, Slayter, I'd pay them the usual rate, and make them rent on ordinary terms. A shilling earned is a lot more than a shilling saved to the ordinary hand."

"Have they a union, and are they members of the Federation?" asked Jenkinson.

"They've just formed a union, do you see. But I'm not going to have it; the ringleaders will get the sack on Saturday, and have to leave their houses in the bargain. It will bring them to their senses, I hope. Bentley's standing in with me too."

"Well, I hope you'll have no more trouble," said Moss, as Slayter moved away.

"Our friend Slayter isn't an easy man to get on with, is he?" remarked Jenkinson. "The truth is, Moss, he's a little god there in Minvale."

"If they have formed a union," said Moss, "he will not find it so easy to have his way in the future. They'll get affiliated, and he'll have all Lancashire to fight one of these days. I suppose we must back him up, but Slayter wasn't born with much tact."

The next day Bentley was in Manchester, and Horridge, Pederton, and Gorely had a chat with him. They learnt that the vicar who was opposing the

master of Minvale was affianced to Miss Slayter. "Slayter is upset over it ; he thought the young fellow would back him up," said Bentley.

"Let's see," laughed Horridge, "what was it his mightiness called it—domestic reasons, wasn't it ? What is his daughter like, Bentley ? Does she take after her father ? "

"She's a very nice girl," said Bentley. "But she likes her own way ; she and her father don't exactly hit it, I fancy, over this engagement. Of course Slayter will have it broken off if Donnimore is obstreperous."

"So I should imagine," laughed Pederton. "Is she good-looking ? "

"Well, yes. I suppose you would call her very pretty, but she is not my style."

Pederton winked at the others. Bentley's wife was not remarkable for good looks, it was common knowledge. She was the daughter of a retired millowner, and Bentley for some years was the manager of his mill. That he belonged to the same religious denomination was in his favour with father and daughter when he went a-wooing, though her brothers bitterly opposed the alliance. Her portion of her father's wealth, which however was far from what Bentley had expected, enabled him to realise his ambition by becoming a master.

"How do you think Slayter is going to come out of the fight ? " asked Horridge.

"Oh, he'll beat 'em," said Bentley confidently. "They are his tenants mostly, and there he's got the whip-hand,"

When the strike had begun Mr. Slayter did not speak with quite the same confidence to his *confrères*, though he still kept an implacable front. "This is going to be a big business," he said importantly. "The vicar, in spite of all I have done for the church, has incited them not to leave their houses. I am calling in the aid of the law at once to evict them. I mean to show them, once for all, who is master."

"Couldn't you compromise, Slayter, even now?" asked Mortimer Ross. "You could afford a two-and-half per cent."

Slayter shook his head. "It isn't that," he said. "I don't care a farthing about the money. I've got a peculiar lot to deal with. If I give way in the slightest I shall have trouble for ever. I made Minvale and I'm going to keep it peaceful. I've got to nip this thing in the bud. Once they are beaten I don't mind giving them two-and-a-half or even five of my own free will. But I must beat them first."

"This sort of thing easily spreads, you know, Slayter," said Ross.

"It does," returned the master of Minvale blandly. "I feel I am fighting for the whole body of us. If my hands win the day you'll soon have trouble of your own."

Jenkinson and one or two more nodded in approval, but Ross shook his head. "That is not my meaning—I believe in compromise," he said coldly, walking away. Slayter was paying less than the current rate, he explained to a few of his friends,

and there was nothing so contagious as a strike. "It's my experience," he said, "that all the great agitations have their beginnings in some small affair. You put the idea of striking into people's heads, and they are like a flock of sheep—they will follow without reason."

"Slayter doesn't consider it a small affair," laughed Gorely, a portly, smiling man of middle age.

"The heyes of Hengland are upon me," laughed Pederton, who was present.

Indeed, Mr. Slayter could talk of nothing but the great affair. He was living in a castle on the frontier, and his was the honourable duty to stem the tide of hostility, lest it break through and overwhelm the country.

"I should like to see Minvale and this parson of yours," remarked Pederton to him a little later. "I've passed through it now and again, but I've never seen it at closer quarters."

Slayter pounced on the suggestion. "Why not come and stay with me the week-end?" he said. "The trains are very convenient on Monday morning."

"I don't know——"

"Oh, come—you, Horridge, and Jenkinson. I shall be delighted," and after a little hesitation they all accepted. Pederton remarked privately to Horridge that he was only going to see what the girl was like. Later in the day Jenkinson promised to bring his wife and daughter.

The Saturday evening there was a dinner-party

at The Hollies, consisting of Horridge, Pederton, Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Jenkinson, Mr. and Mrs. Bentley, and Miss Wilsden, a friend of Mabel's from Mentley.

In the afternoon the ladies went for a drive with Mabel through Mentley, picking up Miss Wilsden on the way, while Mr. Slayter showed his handiwork to his male guests. More than once during the afternoon he told them what Minvale was before he took it in hand, the number of houses, and the state of its scanty population. "For all practical purposes it didn't exist," he said, and flourished his hand as if to say, "And look at it now!" And it must be said in his defence that he really believed he had bestowed incalculable benefits on its people, that he had made the desert blossom, and was reaping as his reward base ingratitude from those he had benefited.

His guests were accustomed to dingy cotton-towns, but the drab appearance of Minvale was accentuated by its amphitheatre of green hills. The Minvale folk eyed the group sullenly. The news had come into the village that there was to be a grand dinner-party that evening at The Hollies, and it was received as an insult to their misery that the master should be royally feasting while they were starving.

"He's browt these other mesters here to show 'em how we're under his thumb, Ah reckon," said one, with lowered brows. "We owt to burn th' factory and print-works down to-neet to show 'em we arena Sam's dogs."

“ Ah wonder what they think of him ? ” mused Bricknoll, who was struck by Pederton’s attractive face and curly auburn hair. “ Ah should just like to go up and ax ’em. That young chap yonder wi’ th’ cigar—Ah wonder what his idea of Sam is ? ”

“ Watch owd Slayter grinnin’ all o’er his face,” said Slaithwaite. “ It meks one’s blood boil, that it do. We’re a poor lot or he’d have grinned another road afore this.”

“ We owt to do summat while they’re here,” said the first speaker.

“ What’s the good o’ talkin’ like that ? ” asked Slaithwaite bitterly. “ What with th’ parson and owd Lemmer and two-three moor we have to crawl about like dogs. Ah should never had owt to do with this business if Ah’d known what Ah do now.”

“ We owt to act on our own a bit,” was the reply.

Bricknoll thought the conversation was a reflection on himself as one of the leaders, and interposed bluntly, “ There’s some o’ yo’ good at talkin’ about what owt to be done. If it had been left to yo’ there’d ha’ been a lot done—wi’ th’ mouth.” It was a remark that brought silence.

After inspecting the works Mr. Slayter had taken his guests to the top of Goddard’s Knap, whence there was a bird’s-eye view of the village, and incidentally a fine outlook on the surrounding district. To the west there was the valley of the Min, bordered by steep hills, their farther slopes sinking down to the great Cheshire plain ; to the east the great frowning mass of Kinder shut in the view. At this

distance it loomed black, but the waterfall at its summit was as a ribbon of white on its breast. There were green hills and peaceful dales everywhere, and in the distance even the Min gleamed like silver.

"Where every prospect pleases and only man is vile," quoted Pederton, with a laugh.

"Just so, just so," responded the master. "I don't suppose there are half a dozen who ever think in what a lovely spot their lot has been cast."

Pederton winked at Horridge. Scenery did not appeal to Jenkinson, whose boast it was that he was practical, and he returned to business. "Well, I hope, Slayter, you'll come through all right."

"I'll turn the lot neck and crop out of the place," he said, with a proud toss of the head. "If they don't soon come to their senses they've seen the last of Minvale."

"I want to go to church to hear this vicar of yours," said Horridge. "He's one of the pale-faced, monkish type, I suppose?"

"No, he isn't," replied the master. "You could understand if he was, but he's quite strongly built and looks healthy. He has evidently got the notion that a parson is meant to rule everybody in the parish. He came from the south of England where, I suppose, he's had everything his own way. But Minvale's the wrong place for that sort of thing. It has been a trial to me that I felt I could not go to church the last Sunday or two, but if you care about it we can go to-morrow."

"We should like to see him," said Pederton.

Mr. and Mrs. Bentley joined the company at dinner. Pederton looked from Miss Slayter to Mrs. Bentley, and found Bentley's remark about the style he appreciated exceedingly humorous. Mrs. Bentley was decidedly plain : her voice was too high-pitched, and her taste in dress made no amends. Her appearance was not attractive, but there were compensations. She was the most cultured person at the table, and she carefully scrutinised her fellow-guests, pathetically eager for intellectual intercourse. It was the pleasure she was continually pursuing, and which she pursued in vain among her friends and acquaintances around her home, with the exception of the doctor ; and it was that which drove her to frequent visits to Manchester and London, where she could find the stimulus for which she craved. She had had two children, but both had died in earliest infancy, and, hating the discussion of business and domestic gossip, she was a lonely woman.

In the drawing-room before dinner she was attracted by Horridge's face. It was apparently a clever and an intellectual face, and she tried him with Swinburne and Tennyson, with the hope that they might pass on to Browning, her favourite author. But she had misread his face ; it was intelligent, but had been sharpened in a practical school. He had read Tennyson, but poetry did not appeal to him, and Mrs. Bentley bored him. From poetry she passed to music, but Horridge's idea of music was the light opera, and she gave up with a sigh and went to chat with Mrs. Jenkinson. If she had been

prepared to discuss the cotton-market, she would have found him able enough ; in fact, though he was only twenty-five, he was an acknowledged expert, and he afterwards rose to a commanding position in Lancashire. But when his fame spread Mrs. Bentley persisted that he was an ignorant vulgarian, with no soul above the making of vulgar wealth, which he could only spend vulgarly. Horridge, on his side, whispered to Pederton that "that woman knocks me over."

"Who?" asked Pederton, who had been talking to Mabel and could think of no one else.

"The beautiful Bentley."

"Oh," said Pederton, not at all interested.

At the table Mrs. Bentley made another attempt at rational discussion. The Manchester Art Exhibition gave her a theme, but she was in the company of Philistines with the exception of Mabel, and Mr. Slayter's dogmatic indication of his preferences in the world of art effectually silenced her.

Pederton had lost himself. Miss Slayter appealed to him as no woman had hitherto done. They talked confidentially during the dinner, for the general conversation had come round to the subject of Donnimore, and she did not wish to participate. For the rest of the evening Pederton devoted himself to her ; he it was who begged her to sing, he turned the music for her, and she played the accompaniment when he sang several of his humorous songs.

"By gad!" he said to Horridge, when they were having a presomnial cigar, "I've not met a more charming girl, old fellow. I don't mind confessing

that she's made an impression on me. Who would have dreamt you would find anybody like her in Slayter's family? Now the curate or vicar or whatever he is has offended paterfamilias honest men might come by what they want."

Horridge smiled. "One of the cases you read about but so seldom see—love at first sight, eh?" he asked.

"Yes," returned Pederton gravely. "I've made myself agreeable to girls, I know, but this is different. I shall go in for all I'm worth while I'm here."

"If you mean it, old fellow, I wish you luck. She certainly is a charming girl, as far as I have seen, for you took care to establish a monopoly."

"I want to establish a monopoly. I am so much in earnest that I tell you frankly I would gladly put up with Slayter as father-in-law."

"Then you're deadly in earnest," returned Horridge, with a smile.

They attended church the next morning, and Donnimore preached. He was not at his best, for he was weary and troubled, and his tone lacked life; but Pederton, who was watching both him and Mabel with jealous and critical eyes, came to the conclusion that he was a most formidable rival. "A cleric," he remarked to Horridge after lunch, "has unnatural advantages; even to the insipid genus his black coat is a good ten-yards' start in the race for a matrimonial prize, and this fellow, Horridge, will want some beating on level terms."

"Buck up," remarked Horridge.

"I mean to," was Pederton's reply. He had

manœuvred so as to walk home with Mabel from church. He praised the architecture and the service and the sermon. "Your vicar is a strong man, I hear, Miss Slayter," he said; "he has defied your father. I cannot help admiring the fellow's boldness."

Mabel coloured slightly. "Yes, I believe he is strong," she said.

"Very strong, from what I have been told," returned Pederton, who was fighting for himself with what he believed was subtlety. "But I am not sure, Miss Slayter, that unbending strength is a good thing in a clergyman. It seems to me it cannot—er—make for the good of religion." And then he wisely turned to talking about the Peak District, his tone increasing in warmth as he noted how enthusiastically she spoke. He would have praised anything she favoured; he was hungering for the girl as they walked side by side.

He accompanied Mabel and Mrs. Jenkinson to church again in the evening. Horridge rallied him on his devotions, but Pederton spoke gravely. "If it's not impossible, Horridge, I am going to win Miss Slayter."

Later in the evening he asked to be presented to Mrs. Slayter, and he remained talking to her for nearly an hour. He felt he had made a good impression.

All the guests left soon after breakfast next morning. In the middle of the week Slayter was again in Manchester. His patience was exhausted, he said, and he was going to strike a final blow; he

was looking to his friends to assist him in finding workers. Pederton took him on one side. "Look here, Slayter," he said, "I'm going to do all I can for you in this business, and the reason is that I've never seen a girl I like so much as Miss Slayter. I wrote to her last night, thanking her for the pleasant time I had at Minvale, and with your permission I'm coming to Minvale again and again."

Slayter shook his hand warmly. "I am very glad to hear it, my dear boy. You have my full approval. I may tell you, although it is very painful for me to speak about it, as you may suppose, that Mabel was engaged to the vicar, but of course after what has taken place that is all over. We have been greatly deceived in him, and it has been a great trouble to both of us."

"I have heard something about it," said Pederton. "Well, I'm going to do all I can to win. I know the fellow who can get you all the hands you want, and I'll go and see him after lunch."

Pederton passed a busy afternoon, and Mr. Slayter left for home soon after four with his promise that there would be a hundred men and women ready to start his works on the following Monday.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FIRST VICTIM

ABRAM SHINDING spent a very uncomfortable day. With culpable lack of foresight he had allowed suspicion to fall on himself, but he blamed his master for it. The morrow would come, and when he was not evicted suspicion would become certainty in the minds of his comrades, and he had seen enough to make him shiver with apprehension. His wife could not understand why they were passed by, but was thankful for the respite. "Ah reckon they'll be here th' first thing in th' mornin'," she said to him. Neighbours were curious to know why they had been left, but she could not enlighten them. "Ah reckon th' mester forgot Abram's name," she speculated. "We shanna be better off than other folks, no fear, him one o' th' Committee."

In the afternoon Shinding, by a devious route, reached The Hollies, and learnt that the master was in Manchester. He returned to the village till dusk, and then took his station inside the entrance-gates to the hall. Mr. Slayter dared no longer walk home at nightfall.

When the dog-cart stopped at the lodge gates

Shinding came forward. "Good evenin', sir; Ah wanted to have a word with yo', please."

"Oh, it's you," said Slayter, and got down at once.

Shinding told him what had occurred. "Done yo' see, sir, Ah darena stop there now."

"No," said the master, "I never thought of it. Well, you have done me good service. Look here, you go home and get what you require, and you and your wife can have the room over the stables—I'll find a bed for Ball elsewhere. To-morrow I'll send a cart for your goods. It's a pity, for you won't be able to give me any information."

"It is a pity, sir, but Ah darena stop."

"Next week I shall find something for you to do. I am going to start the works with fresh hands, and I shall want you then as a sort of foreman. But go home now and get your wife and children and what clothes you need."

Shinding touched his cap. "Thank yo' kindly, sir. Ah shanna get here, sir, if yo' dunna mind, much afore midneet. Ah mun let folks get to bed first."

"Very well; you'll find a bed ready. You've stood by me, Shinding, and I'll stand by you."

"Thank yo', sir," and Shinding went off with a cheerful heart.

He whistled as he went home. But there he came against an unexpected obstacle. Ever since her marriage Mrs. Shinding had been in subjection, and had suffered prompt physical correction when she dared rebel. She had married to escape the

rule of a step-father who was cruelly jocular regarding her red hair. When she had adorned herself till she was self-satisfied his caustic jests regarding her hair deeply wounded her pride and drove her to marriage with Abram Shinding. She expected little from married life, but found less. Abram was radically dissatisfied and small-souled, and Mrs. Shinding by degrees became a slattern who let the morrow take care of itself.

Abram began jauntily: "We're in clover, Meg. Thee and me and th' childer's goin' up to Th' Hollies to sleep to-neet, and th' mester'll send for th' furnisher to-morrow. Next week Ah shall have a good job—two pound a week, Ah reckon."

Mrs. Shinding stared at him. "Art' drunk?" she asked. "What dost' mean?"

"What Ah say. Th' mester's goin' to look after us."

"Th' mester? Sam? Why should—— Dost' mean to say," as the truth came upon her, "tha's been standin' in with him? Is that wheer thy money's been from?"

"What has it to do with thee?" he asked, with a growl. "Ah've none been a foo' if other folk have. Get together what clothes tha needs for a day or two, and soon after eleven we'll start. There's a first-rate room ready for us, and we shall be in clover."

"Ah'm none goin'," said Mrs. Shinding.

"Yea, but tha art."

"Ah'm none goin'."

“Look here, Ah winna stand any jaw. If tha doesna get ready Ah’ll mek thee—so theer !”

Mrs. Shinding’s face was pale with intense passion. Never of late years had she defied her husband, but she defied him now. “Tha can do what tha likes, but *Ah* winna go. Thee to stand in wi’ th’ mester and be in his pay ! Ah wonder how tha can look any man in th’ face. Ah see now why we werena turned out. If Ah’d known how tha’d got thy money, what Ah’ve eaten would ha’ choked me.”

“Here !” cried Shinding, “stop thy row or Ah’ll mek thee !”

But Mrs. Shinding was deeply stirred, and did not heed. “Ah’d a good mind to go in th’ street and tell everybody.”

Shinding’s reply was to deal her a blow. “Get ready afore Ah hurt thee,” he said.

Blows had been efficacious in the past, but they failed now. She sat down stubbornly. “Ah tell thee, once for all, Ah winna go ; if he’s bowt thee he hasna bowt me. And if tha hits me agen Ah’ll out in th’ street and everybody shall know.”

He advanced towards her threateningly, but she did not attempt to get out of his way. Her attitude was so amazing, and his fear of his comrades so great that he drew back and condescended to argument. It was the best chance he had ever had ; there would be no more narrow living ; he would almost certainly be appointed foreman, and he had done what he had because he was sick of cant and canters. When that failed he fell back on threats, but, with a woman’s intuition, she saw that for once she was

dominant, and told him that she would be no partaker in blood-money.

"Very well," he said sullenly, assaulting as a finale the maternal instinct, "Ah'll go and tek th' childer."

"Tha winna," she said. "If tha tries Ah'll bring all Minvale round thee. Sithee, Ah give thee a quarter of an hour to get thee gone; if tha arena Joe Brinton and some of 'em shall talk to thee."

He uttered horrid threats, but he was powerless, and with a few clothes tied in a handkerchief he left the house. "Sam's dog!" she yelled after him.

While he was hastening as fast as he could towards safety, Mrs. Shinding went to tell her neighbours. "We've been livin' on Sam's blood-money," she cried with angry tears, "and it nayther choked me nor th' childer. Ah tow'd th' rogue to-neet he'd be torn in pieces in th' streets when Sam couldna save him, but," with a quaver, "Ah do hope they winna hurt him, for he's fayther o' my childer when all's said and done."

Mr. Slayter met his daughter at the dinner-table. He had a worried look, but he was in good spirits. "I invited Bentley and Draxton to dinner this evening, Mab, but they were engaged; they're coming to-morrow, and we shall have a confab on business afterwards," he said, as they were taking soup. "I and Bentley are not going to knuckle under. I've had a busy day in town, and I've done something, and on Monday two hundred hands are coming to my works and fifty to Bentley's. If

that doesn't bring the fools to their senses I'll have another two hundred next week. And I'll let 'em know that if I have to get a second batch I shan't take any of the old hands back; they can clear out of Minvale for good, and then we shall have peace."

The triumphant tone made Mabel forget to coax him. She put down her spoon and looked him resolutely in the face. "Papa, I hate to hear you talk in that manner. I have been in Minvale to-day, and it is distressing. I have been in some of the houses; and Frank, whom I accidentally met—yes," as she saw his look, "it was an accidental meeting. I went on mummy's behalf, and I saw some of them being turned out of their houses. Papa, it is wretched—wretched! Mullins, the Irishman, and his wife fought against the police, and the crowd rescued them. There will be murder done before long, I am certain. I went into one house where, like many others, the children are sickening for food and comfort. You didn't think that the children would be suffering too, papa, did you?"

Slayter flushed angrily. "What has it to do with me, my dear? If they cared a brass farthing for their children they wouldn't have gone on strike, and if they cared now they'd end it. I'm not going to give in. They went on strike, and I'm not going on my hands and knees to beg them to start work again. I am sorry to hear that you have been with Donnimore; I can't wonder at your attitude now I know that."

"Anyhow, papa, neither mummy nor I can

stand callously by while the poor children and mothers are starving. I am going to help, and mummy wishes to speak to you directly after dinner. Papa, I am sure in your heart you feel wretched too."

Slayter looked at his daughter. He was doing right ; he had glowed with satisfaction in the train, after his meeting with his brother employers, to feel that he was standing in the breach and fighting almost single-handed. Donnimore was not more certain he was right than Slayter was that afternoon. It was for no selfish ends he was fighting, he had persuaded himself from the beginning, and the approval of many of his brethren that day had intensified his belief. His only bitterness he found in his own home.

He was on the point of forbidding his daughter to carry out her intentions, but he saw by her face that she was in one of her obstinate moods. "If you wish to prolong their sufferings do so," he said coldly. "You foolish girl! can't you see that nothing but starvation will bring them to their senses? And the more they starve the sooner——"

Mabel sprang to her feet with an exclamation of alarm. The door had quietly opened, and Mrs. Slayter stood before them. Slayter turned his head at his daughter's cry and also jumped up. For nearly two years his wife had not been downstairs, and then only with assistance.

"Good heavens, Emma!" he cried.

Mrs. Slayter's eyes gleamed unnaturally. "Sam," she said, holding herself up by the door, "do you

know what you are making of Minvale ? They are starving, and you are making them homeless too, and raising all the wickedness of Satan there for the sake of a little more wealth. ”

“ My dear,” said Slayter, bewildered and alarmed, “ what has brought you ? How did you come ? ”

“ I came to tell you I cannot rest—I cannot rest. Our money will be a curse with the wails of the mothers and the angry passions we are rousing. Sam, it is killing me, kil-ling—me,” and the impulse that had triumphed over her physical condition being spent, she collapsed on the floor before her husband or daughter could reach her.

The groom was sent at a hard gallop for the doctor, and the servants carried her upstairs again. When the doctor arrived she had not recovered consciousness, and he told her husband bluntly that her condition was most serious. He could not imagine, he said, how she had summoned strength to get downstairs, but she must have expended all her vital energy in the effort.

There was no opportunity for Mabel to carry out her plans. The groom was sent to Manchester for a trained nurse, but, nevertheless, Mabel felt her place would be in the sick-room, and she wrote a brief note to Donnimore to tell him what had occurred. But already the news had reached Minvale. Some openly rejoiced that the tyrant had troubles of his own, but there was much sympathy for the suffering woman, which was increased when a distorted account of her action, obtained from the servants, became current. “ The hand of

the Lord ! the hand of the Lord ! ” said Josiah Plee, who was becoming stern and morose.

“ Nay, lad,” said Matthew Lemmer, “ dunna let us find the Lord’s hand in an enemy’s troubles, or someb’dy meight find it in our own. Ah’m very sorry. Hoo’s a good woman, by all accounts, and we’ll pray for her. It meight be that it’ll soften th’ mester’s heart. Ah do hope it will.”

But there was no sign of softening ; on the contrary, he raged against the rascals who had been the cause of his wife’s collapse, and he spoke angrily to Mabel. “ I’ve tried all I could to keep worries from her,” he said at breakfast the following morning. “ I thought you would know better than to tell her.”

“ I did not tell her until she knew a great deal,” said Mabel, with spirit. “ Oh, papa, are our troubles never to end ? ”

“ They won’t if you act foolishly,” said the father sourly. “ The truth of the matter is, the hands would have come to their senses before this if it had not been for Donnimore. The fellow must be thrown out of this parish quick.”

Mabel said nothing more, but went back to the sick-room. Her mother now seemed conscious, but she was not able to speak, and it was plain, even to Mabel’s inexperienced eye, that unless there was a change soon she would be motherless. Everything else was forgotten in her anxiety, and she never knew until long afterwards that there were more evictions that morning, and, in spite of all Donnimore and the committee could do, the temper of the

people was rising. Jim Bateson, who was Bricknoll's brother-in-law, fired by Mullins's example, with the assistance of two friends grimly defended his house until they were overpowered and taken to the lock-up. Again there was an attempt to rescue, but the police were in too great number for its success.

On the Saturday evening Mrs. Slayter regained consciousness, though her condition was no less critical. On the Sunday afternoon, when the rain was beating on the windows, she feebly beckoned her daughter to her side. "Send—for—Frank," she managed to whisper.

"Frank? Frank Donnimore?" asked Mabel, in some surprise.

Mrs. Slayter nodded, and Mabel went downstairs to her father. "Mummy is worse, I'm sure," she said, with a quivering lip, "and she wants to see Mr. Donnimore."

Slayter turned to the window while he spoke. "Please yourself," he said coldly.

She wrote a note and sent it at once, and then went to her room to indulge in a few tears. It was the first time the imminence of death had assaulted her feelings, and with the circumstances it seemed to her too tragic a burden for a girl's shoulders. If her mother were taken from her she would be left helpless and rudderless to face a troubled sea. Life was intolerably hard now; surely fate could not be so ruthless as to deal her that supreme blow! In her mind she whimperingly interrogated fate: what had she done, or left undone, that everything should

be wrong? She prayed that her mother might be spared, but it was a prayer of selfishness.

Donnimore came at once, and Mabel met him at the door. "I am afraid mummy is much worse, Frank," she said, her lips quivering again. "Will you come up now?"

Donnimore put his hand on her shoulder. "God strengthen you then, dearest," he said tenderly.

She broke down at that, and begged him to wait till she was calmer. "I can't help it, Frank, though I have tried to be brave. I mustn't let mummy see me like this."

"Take your time, my dear. We had prayers in church this morning for her recovery, and Lemmer told me prayers were offered up at a prayer-meeting last night for her. You see, although she was not able to get out into the world, everybody knows her truly."

They went upstairs, and Mrs. Slayter smiled when he took her hand.

"Communion," she whispered, and Donnimore understood.

"I shall be glad," he said.

To Mabel the rite with its solemn suggestion of death was an agony. It seemed to her an acknowledgment that all hope was gone, and she watched her mother's face with painful suspense lest her life should flicker out with the conclusion of the service. She sighed with relief when she detected no change.

When it was over Donnimore took Mrs. Slayter's hand again to say good-bye, but with her eyes she

called Mabel to his side. "Be good to her," she said, with a smile.

"I will cherish her, not only for her own, but her mother's sake," said Donnimore. "I see the effort has been very great for you, and I will go now, but I will come again whenever you want me."

Mabel accompanied him to the door. "I am afraid mummy is dying," she quavered.

"Courage, heart of my heart!" he said, and kissed her.

Mrs. Slayter did not speak again. At two o'clock in the morning the nurse summoned Mr. Slayter to see his wife pass from sleep into death. The strike had taken its first victim.

CHAPTER XX

INCIDENTS IN THE FIELD

JOSIAH PLEE in these dark days was staggering under a burden whose grievousness deeply troubled his friends. When Mrs. Plee had spoken of duty she was not honouring the cause by mere service of the lips. Despite her weakness she had from the first thrown herself bravely and whole-heartedly into service. On them that had been blessed with the supreme grace of faith, she remarked to Mrs. Lemmer, lay the duty of comforting and sustaining their sisters who were unlighted by the rays that brought them happiness and peace; and she went among her neighbours, weak in body but strong in purpose, heartening them and cheering them, and in the first stages of the conflict playing a great though unobtrusive part. The most envious neighbours no longer thought her proud and "stuck-up"; she won her way to all hearts by her gracious sympathy. When Donni-more organised his soup-kitchen, she went to him and offered her services, which he gladly accepted, and in less than a week she was his chief assistant. Her bright face, beautiful in spite of its thinness and pallor, was an encouragement to him when the burden was most intolerable; and as he watched her

and noticed her winning manner there was in his heart a secret feeling of disappointment, which he fought against, that Mabel was not like her. He was sure if Mabel broke the bonds of convention and prejudices she would be as this woman, who seemed to make her way to the heart and touch a responsive chord as surely as the skilled surgeon can explore a diseased organ.

One evening, after doubts and shrinkings, Mrs. Plee summoned up her courage to a supreme service. Without saying a word even to her husband she went to The Hollies and asked for Mr. Slayter. She was kept waiting for nearly half an hour before he went to her in the hall. It was not a propitious moment ; he was in one of his worst humours, and was hardly civil to her. "Well, what is it you want ?" he asked ungraciously. "If it's anything to do with the strike you are wasting your time coming here."

"Oh, I hope not, sir," she said, in a tone that was more cultivated than his. "I have come unknown to any one to plead for Minvale, Mr. Slayter. Won't you——"

"My good woman, it is useless coming to me. Talk to your husband and the other agitators ; they are the ones to end it."

"Oh, sir, I hoped that I might plead successfully with you," she returned bravely. "You are a Christian gentleman, Mr. Slayter, and I am confident if you would only cease to think we are opposed to your interests you would do what I ask."

"It's no good——"

"Please come with me to-night, sir, and see some

of the wretched homes, and this strike won't last another day. Mr. Slayter, if you only would you would be the most popular man in Minvale to-morrow."

He opened the door. "Good night," he said; "go and talk to your husband and the other ring-leaders, and tell them it's their last chance."

She wept a little on her way home, and did not tell her husband until the following evening. To Josiah it was a proof of the master's hard heart. He could not conceive how any one could resist her pleading.

In spite of the weather she laboured incessantly, and Dr. Tredell, meeting her one day, was very angry. He had imagined, he said, that she was a woman of some sense, and she ought to be at home taking care of herself.

"I am taking care, doctor," she said, with a disarming smile, "but I could not stay at home selfishly when there is so much suffering in the village."

"You ought, Mrs. Plee," he returned gravely. "Minvale in winter is a trying place for you, even if you take every precaution."

"Thank you, doctor; I will indeed be very careful."

And careful she was in a way. She wrapped herself up well and changed her boots frequently. But her creed did not allow her to desist from service; she recognised that she had a duty to her own body and to her husband, but there were higher duties, was her view. She spent herself, not recklessly, but with wise economy of strength, but she

could not recognise that she was practically an invalid and her field of labour on behalf of Minvale ought to be her own room. A slight cold brought on a cough, and the day following her visit to Mr. Slayter another cold supervened, and she was helpless. When Dr. Tredell came to see her she looked at him with a smile. "Don't scold, doctor," she said, "I really was very careful."

"I'm not going to scold, Mrs. Plee, but I am glad this cold has come. You will have to remain indoors, where you ought to have been all the time."

"I'm going to get better quickly," she retorted.

"I hope so, but I am going to ask your husband to see you are kept a prisoner till the mild weather comes."

"Then I hope it will come soon," rejoined Mrs. Plee.

"Every care must be taken of her," said the doctor to Plee the next day. Plee nodded, and in the solitude fought against great fears compared with which the strike, to his mind, was nothing. But when he hinted his dread to his wife she laughed it away for the time. But he had eyes to see, as had Mrs. Lemmer, and as the days went by he found neither courage nor more than a temporary relief from his terrors on his knees.

On the Sunday evening that Mrs. Slayter lay dying, Lemmer and his wife were making a meagre supper of weak tea and cold potatoes. The house was no longer the comfortable home it had been; the carpet had gone from the parlour, the cocoa-nut matting from the living-room, and the bedrooms

had been almost stripped. Both looked worn and much older, but their eyes were clear and their tone serene. Late on the Saturday night a furniture-dealer had fetched away the American organ and some other articles, and part of the proceeds had gone to purchase a few delicacies for Mrs. Plee.

Mrs. Lemmer had only just returned from Plee's house, and she was talking about her visit to her husband. "Hoo's none any better as Ah can see, fayther. It seems to me hoo used up all her strength in doin' what hoo could, and hoo's badly, Matt, hoo's badly, but hoo's as cheerful as ever. Hoo laughed as sweet as a child most o' th' time. Hoo's a little witch, as Ah tow'd her many a time. But Josh, poor lad, troubles me as much. Hast' noticed any difference in him, Matt?"

"Ay, Ah have, mother," responded Lemmer, with a cloud on his face. "He does his share of work, but he sits a lot, thinking, and it goes to me heart. Ay've been prayin' often th' last two-three days as the Lord will spare her. He all but worships her, and no wonder, for hoo is a handsome lass and a good lass, too."

"He sits a' whoam, fayther, just the same. He were sittin' in th' corner, and he didna say a word unless we spoke to him. Ah'm feart for him, above a bit."

"Ay, mother, so am Ah."

"Ah were thinkin' as Maggie could go and stop with her. Ah could spare her."

"We'll ax her when hoo comes in."

Maggie, who had been visiting a friend, came in

before supper was over. "Ah'll stay with her as much as yo' like," she said. "Ah'll go to-morrow."

"That's reet, me lass," said Lemmer fondly, drawing her to him and taking her hand in his. He was very proud and fond of the girl, who had cheerfully borne the privations of the past few weeks, and he dreaded when the time should come that she would leave them. She was engaged to a young mechanic, employed by a Manchester firm, which had sent him out to Capetown on a three years' contract. Her marriage was to take place as soon as he returned home.

Before daylight the next morning Minvale had several items of news to discuss. Mrs. Slayter had died in the night, and Slayter's mill was starting with imported operatives who had been brought by an early train that morning, and Abram Shinding was installed with them as a general assistant and overseer. A hundred men and women had entered the mill gates, it was stated, and before the week was out not only the mill but the print-works would have sufficient hands.

By eight o'clock, in drizzling rain, scores of men and women were round the mill gates to catch a sight of the interlopers who had taken sides with the enemy. There were muttered and open threats used, but the general cry was, "They dunna know ; they winna help Sam when we've made it plain to 'em."

But the aliens did not come out, as was expected. Breakfast was being prepared for them in the mill. A greater crowd gathered there at noon, but again

they did not appear. In the afternoon there was another sensation. A score of constables arrived by train, and bedding, tables, and other necessities were being carried into the empty houses of Brick Row, a *cul-de-sac* from which all the tenants had been evicted.

Soon after five the police stationed themselves about the mill gates, and at the half-hour the workers came forth into the presence of nearly the whole of Minvale. The police escorted and guarded them, but there was no attempt at violence, though entreaties and hints came from scores of voices. "Dunna yo' know yo're robbin' us? If yo're English yo'll go back whoam and none help th' mesters again us."

"Ladies and gentlemen," cried Brinton, in a voice heard above the clamour, "we're on strike here, and yo're feightin' agen us, whether yo' mean it or yo' dunna. Most o' us are clemmin' rayther than give in. If yo've got any feelin's for yo'r brothers and sisters yo' winna do another stroke o' work here. Go whoam to-neet for pity's sake."

"Here, yo' strangers," cried Bricknoll, "Sam Slayter is a devil, and them that side wi' th' devil will go to hell, Ah've allus heared," at which there were smiles from friends and foes.

"Go back whoam to-neet," said Mrs. Slaithwaite. "We dunna wish yo' any harm, but yo'd better go now."

"Ay, go back whoam while yo' have th' chance," shouted another, and the same cry was taken up

by many. Some walked as close to the workers as the police would allow, telling them in conversational tones what Minvale's wrongs and sufferings were, and begging them, as fellow-creatures, not to aid the enemy.

Seven of the girls, either from fright or sympathy, demanded their money for the day, and, having obtained it, in spite of the jeers and persuasions of their comrades, left for home. The crowd cheered them, and a hundred or so escorted them to the railway station and cheered again as the train steamed out. Meanwhile, the remainder were housed, with police to guard the entrance of the street and to move on those who lingered near.

When Brinton reached the committee-room that evening he found Bricknoll, Boothroyd, and Ingham listening to Slaithwaite's growl. Josiah Plee sat in a corner, staring at a handful of fire in the grate.

Slaithwaite had been speaking his mind with great freedom for some minutes, and he went on in a louder tone as he noted Brinton's entrance. "What we've seen to-neet is what it's come to," he cried. "If we'd done what we owt to ha' done, folks 'ould never ha' been turned out, and he would-na have dared to bring that lot in. It's what Ah said from th' first—there's too much Methody in this business, wi' 'Dunna do this' or 'Dunna do that,' and 'Keep quiet, please, good boys and girls' "—Slaithwaite spoke in tones of mimicry—"till Ah'm fair sick o' it, and there's a lot moor like me. If yo' feight, yo' mun feight, and with no kid gloves on nayther. Ah'm fair sick of it, so theer, and

Ah'll tell owd Lemmer so when he comes in. If he and th' parson are to rule th' business Ah'm clearin' out, and there'll be moor to follow."

Those present were watching Brinton furtively, and they had never seen him so passionately moved. His face paled and his eyes were small specks of light as he took Slaithwaite by the shoulder and swung him roughly round. "For two pins, Bob," he said, in a voice that was more minatory from its levelness of tone, "for two pins Ah'd chuck thee in th' street, and, by gum! Ah will if tha says owt else, lad."

"Howd on, Joe," said Bricknoll; "dunna let us get agate o' fallin' out among oursels, or we meight as well shut up shop at once. Happen Bob didna——"

Brinton waved his arm impatiently. "Parson and th' Methodies!" he said, shoving his fists deep in his pockets as though they were safer there. "Let's start wi' th' parson. What's he been doin'? Spendin' his brass every day on soup and workin' till he looks rare and badly. And owd Lemmer? Thee, Bob, wi' thy Methodies, what dost' think that foo' has done? He'd a tidy bit saved, everybody knows, but he's spent it all in this strike, and th' furnisher's goin' bit by bit. And what's th' last thing th' owd foo' and his wife—who's another—ha' done? Sowd [sold] th' organ as were their Albert's, for Ah spotted it in Ogden's window to-neet and went in. Ogden had to keep to hisselt' whose it were, he tow'd me, but Ah got it out o' him. It were tekken away late o' Setday neet, so

as nobody should know. But, by gum ! it winna be sowd. Ah tow'd Ogden he mun part with his yead afore he parts wi' that. Dost' know what sellin' that meant to 'em, eh, thee that's sick o' Methodies ? But it's no good axin' thee, for tha never would know, but if tha ever has thy heart-strings pulled out tha will. That's thy Methodies and parsons ! Wait till th' owd foo' comes in, and Ah shall have summat to say to him, but dunna thee, Bob, say owt else just now, or thee and me will be sorry for it."

Nobody spoke, though Slaithwaite looked as if he would have liked to justify himself. A moment later Donnimore and Lemmer came in together, in earnest conversation.

"Good evening, all," said Donnimore, and Lemmer nodded his greeting and placed his hand on Brinton's shoulder, who was nearest the door. "Well, lad ?" he said.

Brinton swung himself free violently, and turned on the old man, towering over him menacingly. "Ah were just talkin' about thee, owd man," he said, with the same savagery of tone. "Ah've just been tellin' t'others tha'rt a foo', a foo', owd mon, and Ah say it now to thy face. Ah should like to knock thy owd yead agen th' wall, that Ah should. Ay, yo' may look"—to Donnimore—"but Ah mean it, if it'd knock sense into it. What done yo' think o' him, sir ? He's spent all his savin's on this strike, as Ah dare say yo' known, and he's partin' wi' th' furnisher now, and as if that werena enough he sowd th' organ on Setday as belonged to his dead lad. Yo' didna know him, sir, but some

of us did, and we can guess a bit how they were feelin' in th' house Setday neet. If that's yo'r religion"—turning on Lemmer again with a more savage note—"why, damn it all, Ah'm rare and glad Ah've got none. Tha meks me fair sick, Matthew."

Donnimore interposed with a smile on his face. "No, you are not glad, my friend."

Brinton turned on him truculently. "Yea, but Ah am, Ah con tell yo'."

Donnimore shook his head.

"Yea, but Ah am. If religion meks such foo's of yo' as yo'll pull your hearts up by th' roots when it isna needed, Ah'm damned glad Ah've got none to mek me a foo', and so Ah tell thee, owd mon. Tha's made me fair sick o' this strike to-neet."

Lemmer's throat had been working a little, but he answered with a faint smile and in a calm voice. "We were glad for it to go, Joe, lad."

Brinton's arms dropped by his sides. "Ah dare say. If tha tow'd me yo' danced for joy Ah'd believe thee, but all th' same Ah should like to leather thee. But Ah tell thee it's comin' back. Ah've bin in Ogden's and tow'd him tha were drunk at th' time—so tha were, one road—and he munna part with it. But theer!" sitting down. "Ah meight talk from now till to-morrow neet and tha'd act like a foo' agen. Ah believe in thy heart tha loves Sam in spite of all."

"Ah hope Ah do, lad."

"Hope! Tha knows in thy heart tha does. If——"

"His wife is dead, lad," said Lemmer quietly.

"Ay, hoo is, and some of ours'll be dead afore long, Ah'm thinkin'. But it's no good talkin' to thee, only Ah wish it were him instead of her."

Donnimore's heart was stirred. He looked furtively at Lemmer and marvelled at the quiet heroism of the man, and then he looked at Brinton. He had made a long stride that evening in his knowledge of the northern man with his sound sense, his independence, and his roughness of manner which he often wore as a mask. For the first time he felt really thankful that his call had been to him.

"We were just talkin' o'er this last move, sir," said Bricknoll to Donnimore. "What done yo' think about it, sir?"

"I cannot say anything harsh, Mr. Bricknoll, just now. You see, I was sent for yesterday to administer the Communion to Mrs. Slayter. She was a woman whom it was a privilege to know. Nothing can ever make up that loss to Mr. Slayter, and, in spite of all, I feel very sorry for him. But with regard to these imported workers we must not lose heart; with steadfast courage we shall conquer in the end. I am as sure as I can be of anything to-night that we cannot fail," and unconsciously his eyes rested for a moment on Lemmer.

"But dunna let's mek no mistake, sir; there's weary times afore us," interposed Brinton. "Hawf a dozen o' them lasses went back whoam to-neet. If we canna persuade t'others to go there'll be hell."

"We must restrain our friends as much as possible, Mr. Brinton."

"We'll do our best, sir, but there'll be hell if they dunna go. Th' evictions were bad enoo, but there's a warm time afore us—a warm time."

"I propose that we send a crier round at once calling a meeting in the market-ground in, say, an hour's time," said Donnimore. "We had better do what we can before their passions are fully roused."

There was no open objection, and an hour later they made their way to the market-ground, where a goodly audience was awaiting them, for even a meeting in the cold and wet was something of a diversion.

Brinton was the first speaker. "Well, yo' independent ladies and gentlemen," he said, "Sam and Bentley have ta'en another trick. Ah amna goin' to say a lot about Sam to-neet, for his wife's lyin' dead, and th' pity is it isna him instead. Ah winna say what we think about this trick of his. Them chaps and wenches, Ah'm sure, dunna know the reets of it or they wouldna have come. But Ah'll say this here to yo': keep yo'r hair on. Let 'em alone. By Friday neet they'll have learnt sense, and winna be here next week. But keep yo'r hair on, yo' that have any."

"Tha'rt none keepin' thine on very well, Joe," cried somebody, and there was general good-humoured laughter. Brinton's locks were certainly wearing thin.

"Ah'm married, yo' see," was Brinton's retort. He was ready to do anything, even stand on his

head, to keep them in good humour, as he explained to Donnimore afterwards.

Lemmer spoke next. "Ah'd a good mind to tell 'em what a foo' tha art," whispered Brinton, as he got up to speak. The old man begged them to be patient. A good woman was lying dead, he said, and he for one felt very sorry for the master. "Ah remember her," he went on, "when hoo could walk th' streets as well as any o' us, and hoo went about doin' all th' good hoo were allowed. It allus seemed to me a misfortune when hoo were laid up. Ah hope that her death will soften hard hearts and bend stubborn wills. Ah hope afore Ah dee to see Minvale a place wheer mester and men can feel kindly to'rds one another."

Donnimore was greeted with a cheer. His frank boyish face, pale though it now was, appealed to them, and the dark days had earned for him the greatest praise of which the Lancashire tongue is capable: "Yon's a mon."

"I cannot say anything more to the purpose than my friends have done," said Donnimore. "Let me beg of you to keep calm, and not show your resentment against those who are working against you. I know how great your sufferings are, but I am proud to share them with you, and God helping us our triumph will not be long delayed."

They cheered him again when he had finished, but Brinton turned to him and Lemmer rather anxiously. "There's none much heart in that," he said. "It means hell, Ah tell yo'. Ah wish it were Sam lyin' dead with all my heart."

“If yo’ arena too tired, sir,” said Lemmer, when the meeting was over, “Ah wish yo’d go wi’ me to see Kitty Plee. Ah’m feart, sir, as moor than th’ mester may lose their wife. Ah’ve been prayin’ a lot as hoo meight be spared.”

“Yes, I’ll go, Mr. Lemmer, certainly. I saw her yesterday, and I have my fears too.”

“Ah went and prayed with her this afternoon, sir, and Ah tried to cheer th’ lad up. If the Lord sees fit to tek her Ah dunna know—Ah dunna know—”

Brinton on his way home called at Lemmer’s house. Mrs. Lemmer was alone, knitting and shedding a few tears over the burden of the days.

Brinton leaned on the half-open door while he spoke. “Matthew’s gone wi’ th’ parson to Josh Plee’s. Ah’ve had to use a lot of me breath to-neet, mother, in callin’ him all th’ foo’s Ah could lay me tongue to, and Ah looked in to go on with it, only Ah dunna like callin’ a woman yo’r age names. But Ah con tell yo’ one thing, mother—that organ isna bein’ sowd out o’ Ogden’s. Good neet.”

CHAPTER XXI

DARK DAYS

EARLY the next morning Mrs. Lemmer was sent for in great haste to Plee's house. The row in which they lived was in the hands of the evictors, and before the morning was out the ailing woman would be homeless.

Plee was standing at his door with his hands in his pockets, watching with a detached look on his haggard face the scene that was taking place a few doors from his own. His whole bearing struck Mrs. Lemmer as unnatural. Trouble was making him crazy, was the thought that passed through her mind. She was, however, a woman for an emergency. She could keep her head and speak in businesslike tones when racked with the sharpest anguish. Neighbours spoke with bated breath of the calm precision with which she had nursed her dying boy.

"Ah didna think Ah should find thee theer doin' nowt, lad," she said sharply. "Come, hurry up; Ah shall tek her to our house. Go and get Jim Seddon's pony-carriage. Tell him it's for me."

Plee looked at her with a wild flash in his eyes. "How long, O Lord, how long?" he muttered.

“Mun Ah ax thee agen? Dost’ want Kitty put in th’ street? Hurry up, or Ah shall go mesel’,” Mrs. Lemmer said, with simulated irritation, and Plee went listlessly.

Mrs. Lemmer’s skill as a nurse was generally recognised in Minvale, and she preached everywhere the doctrine that cheerfulness and light were two most potent medicines, and nothing ever irritated her so much as the lugubrious faces and woeful tones that some sympathetic souls think is the only correct demeanour for a sick-room. More women, she was wont to say, had been talked into their graves in childbirth in Minvale than anywhere.

For the sake of warmth Mrs. Plee’s bed was in the living-room. White and big-eyed she lay in the grey of the morning, looking like a frail and delicate lily.

“Well, me dear,” said Mrs. Lemmer, “how are yo’ this mornin’? Yo’ had a good neet’s rest, Ah hope?”

“Not very good,” said Maggie Lemmer; “her cough wouldn’t let her sleep much.”

“Yo’ dunna feel like gettin’ up this mornin’, me dear, Ah reckon, but yo’ll have to; they’re startin’ turnin’ out this row. They’ll want to put that bed outside, so Ah’ve sent Josh for Seddon’s pony-carriage, and Ah’m tekkin’ yo’ to our house, wheer Ah mean to put a stop to coughs and that sort o’ foolishness.”

Mrs. Plee flushed. “We can’t give you any more trouble, mother.”

“Th’ trouble is to bring my rheumatically legs

here every day, me dear. It's to save me trouble. We'll roll yo' up in blankets till yo're like a bundle of hay, and Josh shall carry yo' out."

Mrs. Plee wept a little. "You are very good to me, mother," she said.

"Ah shall be very bad to yo' if there's any tears," retorted Mrs. Lemmer. "It's none everybody in Minvale can go rides in carriages with things as they are. Now, Maggie, let's get her ready."

The attention of the crowd was diverted from the evictions to Mrs. Plee's departure. There were murmurs of sympathy as Josiah carried her, a bundle of blankets, into the pony-carriage. There was little said, save by two or three women of the sort who must ever be vocal, but it added depth to the resentment that was slowly burning deep in some minds. Brinton had no doubt that they were living over a volcano, but his comrades were sanguine that they could restrain the passions of their adherents.

The day passed quietly—too quietly for those who were sensitive to the atmosphere. The air was full of rumours. "Sam's lambs," as Minvale called the imported workers, passed on to the mill in the morning and returned at nightfall through a vista of hostile faces. They were received with groans and cries, and entreaties from some of the more sober to think what they were doing and depart in peace.

Late that night more "lambs" arrived, and it was reported that the following Monday the print-works would be started with a big importation of



THERE WERE MURMURS OF SYMPATHY AS JOSIAH CARRIED HER, A BUNDLE OF BLANKETS, INTO THE PONY-CARRIAGE.

hands. A dozen determined men, of whom Bricknoll and Slaithwaite were leaders, had resolved that the work should not go on. Coal was vital to Slayter's success, and the group meant to prevent any going into the works. The plan was kept a secret from Donnimore and Lemmer, and even Brinton would take no part, though they tried hard to persuade him, knowing his value as a leader.

"Nay," he said, "Ah were foo' enough to become one o' th' leaders, and Ah munna act on me own. Yo' please yo'rsels, lads, and good luck to yo'. Only mind this—it isna a babby's game we're playin'. If yo' can do some good, go on with it, but no kids' tricks."

"We thowt tha'd be sure to come in, Joe," said one.

"Yo' thowt wrong then. Yo' canna have it all roads. Yo' would have me on th' committee, and a chap mun do like th' rest. But theer! Yo' please yo'rsels."

Slaithwaite wanted to tell him that since he was in with the parson and Methodies he dared do nothing, but Slaithwaite said it when they left him. It was not wise to say too much to Brinton just then.

Josiah Plee, though he mechanically attended meetings, could take no interest in the committee's doings. His wife had seemed better on her removal to Lemmer's, but she quickly collapsed, and the doctor spoke quite frankly to Mrs. Lemmer; the poor woman, he said, had reached a critical stage. Brinton, who had not yet been dispossessed, took Plee to sleep with him, and, like Lemmer, did all

he could to rouse him from what they considered dangerous brooding. But even Brinton, on religious topics, could not move the young man. Brinton compelled him to go about with him, and with many others they watched Mrs. Slayter's funeral procession pass.

She was buried at Denneby, six miles from Minvale, where her father and mother lay. The mourners included Mr. and Mrs. Bentley and Pederton, who had written a warm letter of sympathy to Mabel when he heard the news, and who hoped that she might find his presence a comfort and support during the painful ceremony. It was fortunate that Minvale churchyard was not the scene, or the mourners would not have been spared angry demonstrations. As the mourning-coaches and the hearse passed through the lower end of Minvale there were loud hisses from some of the assembled sightseers. An angry flush came to the master's face, but Mabel hardly heard; she was burying her mother, and true sympathy was denied her. There was a chasm betwixt her father and herself; she did not doubt that he had felt his wife's death deeply, but he had given few signs of feeling the blow, and it had not brought father and daughter any nearer each other, but rather widened the breach. Mabel saw that instead of softening him he was more resolved than ever to bring his recalcitrant hands to heel.

And she was cut off from Donnimore. He had sent her two letters of warm sympathy, but the comfort of his presence was denied her. She had

suggested to her father that he should be asked to assist at the funeral, but Mr. Slayter had answered with a forcible "No," and she did not insist. She was suffering acutely, and the few relatives who were present at the funeral could not reach her heart. Pederton did his best, but he was not the one she longed for. The mourners were full of "poor dear Sam's awful trial," who was suffering bereavement whilst making a stand against black ingratitude, and Mabel could only nod her head by way of reply when they addressed themselves to her. Sharp discipline may crush the backboneless beyond all hope of rising again, leaving them to whine and wail their way through life, but those of grit it roughly but speedily develops to the full stature of manhood and womanhood. For twenty-two years Mabel had been shielded from every adverse breath; now the rough winds were buffeting her into healthy life. As she rode in that sable procession she could think of the mothers she had seen in Minvale a few days before who had to bear physical and mental ills aggravated by starvation. The thought on such an occasion was sufficient proof that the discipline was not in vain.

CHAPTER XXII

ANOTHER VICTIM

BUT it was not at The Hollies where sorrow found its chief resting-place in Minvale that day. In the dark hours of the next morning Maggie Lemmer, who was watching while her mother slept, went and called her agitatedly. Mrs. Lemmer hurried to the sick-chamber in her nightdress to find that her daughter's fears had not been groundless. Mrs. Plee had left Minvale and its woes in her sleep. Maggie ran for the doctor, who lived less than half a mile away. He came at once, but a slight examination was enough. It was syncope, he said, and then explained the term, adding that he was not at all surprised, but very sorry.

"Her death lies at Slayter's door," Maggie Lemmer answered him fiercely; and then broke into a passion of sobbing, for she loved the dead woman.

Plee was sleeping with Brinton, and Lemmer prepared himself to go to tell him. It was four o'clock, and Mrs. Lemmer interposed. "Nay, fayther, dunna go yet," she said; "let him sleep another hour or two if he can. It'll be soon enough to tek this sort of news at six o'clock."

"Tha'rt reet, mother," said Lemmer, who in the cheerless light of a single candle looked completely bent and broken. "Ah wish—oh, Ah do wish, mother, Ah could go wi' different news to this," he added wearily. "It's costin' a lot—a great lot."

"It allus does, Matt, to get reet done," returned Mrs. Lemmer, with a flash of indomitable spirit.

The man took heart visibly. "Ay, so it does, mother—so it does. Ah'd lost me faith for th' minit, Ah reckon. Ah'll go downstairs and ax his Father to prepare him for it. Ah'm glad tha stopped me from goin' now. There's nowt Ah can do just now, is there?"

"No, Matt."

Lemmer went downstairs into the parlour that was very bare now, and in the cold and darkness pleaded for "the lad," as he called Plee. He pleaded that the blow might be softened to him, and then, with a fine sense, went on to pray that the lad might devote himself to the work in hand. "Help him to work, Lord—help him to work in this just cause," he cried again and again, in passionate tones. "Work for others is Thy medicine, O Lord, for breakin' hearts; help him and help me and all of us to work. O Lord, there are two women lyin' dead that this strike has killed. Grant, O Lord, for Thy Son's sake, that they havena died in vain, or those near and dear to them winna be able to stand it. Let it soften our hearts, Lord, and strengthen our hands. O Lord, come and reign here in Minvale this mornin'. Satan is strong here, Lord; come this mornin' and reign. And, O Lord, give us the

victory soon in this strike ; give it us now, O Lord, lest Satan teks more souls for his. Help the lad, Lord, and help me to go to him this mornin'. It's a sore task for me, Lord, and Ah darena go if Thou doesna go with me. Lord, save us and strengthen us."

In the dark parlour he prayed for nearly two hours, and rose from his knees chilled to the bone. He drank a cup of hot water before he went out into the gloom and cutting wind that was blowing direct from the Peak. But he was unconscious of the cold ; he was praying with more intensity for the lad as he went along.

Brinton had just come downstairs and had opened the door to look out on the weather when Lemmer came up. He could see it was no glad tidings that had brought the old man out so early. "What is it, Matthew ?" he whispered. "Is hoo worse ?"

"Hoo deed in her sleep, lad, about three this mornin'."

Brinton gazed blankly at him for some seconds. "He's just gettin' up, Matthew. Sayin' his prayers when Ah come down. Tha mun go in and tell him ; Ah'm clearin' out o' th' road for a bit. Tha's been prayin', Ah know, Matthew ; Ah'm goin' outside to swear a bit, and Ah wish Sam were within hearin' distance. Ah'll say this for thy soort, Matthew ; yo're in yo' reet place when there's work o' this soort to be done."

Lemmer laid his hand on his arm. "Then why doesna thee, lad ?" he asked yearningly.

"Nay, Matthew, let me get outside and swear a

bit. If Ah dunna go out and curse Sam Ah meight srike [cry] or get blind drunk," and Brinton, with his boots unlaced, left his door.

In a few minutes Plee came downstairs. He listened to Lemmer in silence, and then put his hands before his face. Lemmer drew him down to his knees and prayed again, as he had in his own parlour, but from Plee there was no response.

Mrs. Lemmer met them at the door. She said no word but put her arms round the young man's neck and kissed him. His lips quivered as he removed her arms. "Can Ah see her?" he asked.

"Yea, lad," said Mrs. Lemmer; "we've laid her out. Come!" and she took him upstairs.

The dawn had not yet lighted the chamber, and a candle was burning in the bare room. He gazed at the bed, with a face as white as the one that lay there, and a few tears rolled down his cheeks. "Shall Ah leave thee with her a bit?" whispered Mrs. Lemmer.

He nodded.

"Dunna forget, lad, hoo's at His reet hand now and none out of her place," she said softly, and closed the door on them.

"Well," said Lemmer anxiously.

"Ah've left 'em alone for a minit; he's sheddin' a tear or two."

"Thank God for that."

"Go outside or in th' parlour a minit or two, fayther; Ah want to do the same."

Lemmer drew his hand affectionately across her shoulders as he passed her on his way out of doors.

Tears came into his eyes also as he thought of all his wife was to him and of the lad bereft of his, and then he fell to passionate petition again that in the death-chamber above him the bereaved might be baptized into fuller life. "According to the measure of his sorrow baptize him with power, Lord," he murmured.

Presently Mrs. Lemmer called him into breakfast and then went upstairs to fetch Plee. He was still kneeling beside the bed. "Come thy ways down wi' me, lad," she said gently.

"Nay, Ah'll stop here a bit."

"Come wi' me. Breakfast is ready."

"Ah dunna want none."

"Come," said Mrs. Lemmer, with an accent of command, and he obeyed.

There was only dry bread and tea for breakfast. Lemmer ate his as tea sops, which was fare he could enjoy when there was plenty of sugar to sweeten it, but for a week or two they had done without sugar. Lemmer asked a blessing as fervently as though a banquet were spread before them, and then called on Plee to fall to. The young man shook his head.

"Tha'll have some breakfast to oblige me," said Mrs. Lemmer sharply. "Nayther thee nor anybody can do the Lord's work fastin'."

Plee looked up with a momentary flash in his fine, dark eyes. "No," he said, and began eating mechanically.

They had finished their scanty meal when Donni-more called. He had met Brinton in the street as

he was on his way to his soup-kitchen and had heard the news from him.

He nodded his greeting, and took Plee's hand with a strong clasp of sympathy.

"We started wi' breakfast this mornin', sir," said Lemmer, "but we're just goin' to have a chapter. Ah should be glad if yo'd read it."

"What shall I read, Mr. Lemmer?"

"The last of Revelations, sir, if you dunna mind. Ah've bin prayin' this mornin', sir, that the Lord would give the lad here the desire and the power for work. When He's ta'en a dear one of ours th' best thing to help us is to start moor strongly to hasten His kingdom."

Plee looked up into their faces. "Ay, Matthew, that is it," he said, with a flash of fire. "To bring the reign of the ungodly to an end speedy; that's it. Dunna be feart; Ah'll do me best."

Donnimore said nothing; he was watching Plee, and it seemed to him that the young man's troubles were too much for his mental health.

"Ay, work, lad; it's the Lord's appointed way to help us to bear sorrow. If Ah could bear it or any part of it for thee, lad, Ah would, gladly; but Ah can only pray and feel for thee."

"You know you have our sympathy, Mr. Plee," said Donnimore. "I have not been married, and so cannot fully realise what your loss means."

Plee nodded again and turned to Lemmer, speaking briskly. "Ah'd better go and order a coffin directly, and then Ah mun walk to Grove and tell my folks."

"Dunna trouble about th' coffin, lad," said Lemmer. "Ah'm goin' that road and Ah'll see to it. Stop in th' house a bit and then go to Grove. Ah've got to go out now."

Donnimore and Lemmer left the house together. "It will be a dear-bought victory, Mr. Lemmer," said the vicar sadly.

"Ah said the same to me wife this mornin', sir, when we knowed th' lass had gone, and hoo said it allus were costly to get reet done. Yo' canna believe how that stiffened me."

"I can guess, Mr. Lemmer. How fortunate you have been!"

Lemmer was quick to interpret. "Ay, but yo'll be as fortunit, sir. Hoo's a good lass at th' bottom, Ah'm sure—summat like her mother. Ah know this strike's cost yo' summat, sir, but eh! we're rare and glad to have yo'."

"If I have thought it costly at times, Mr. Lemmer, I am ashamed when I think of Plee. But have you noticed he is not the same man? The last week or two he has seemed to me like a man thoroughly crushed, and now the crowning blow has come. She was a sweet and dainty woman, Mr. Lemmer."

"She were, sir, and her sweetness started from the inside. They were fair fond o' one another, and yo' canna comfort a man like him just now wi' th' last chapter o' Revelations, grand and comfortin' as it is. Work, sir, work, it's th' only way a man can forget. My heart's very sore for th' lad this mornin'—very sore. Hoo's ta'en out

o' th' miseries o' th' world, it's true enough, but that doesna comfort yo' when yo'r heart's raw. He'll put out his hand in th' neet and touch nowt, and if ever a man wants all his hope and his faith and his courage it's then."

Donnimore nodded. He was trying to imagine the bliss of life with Mabel and then to be bereft of her while she was still young and full of lusty life. "God help him!" he said, with an accent almost of agony.

Lemmer left him to give the order for the coffin to James Godwin, who was a personal friend of his. "Ah'll be responsible," he explained, "but nayther Josh nor me can pay for it just yet."

"Yo' pay when Ah ask for it, and we shanna fall out," said Godwin. "Ah'll go up after breakfast and measure her, but Ah'll tell thee what, Matthew, Ah could go with a better heart to measure some other folk."

"Ay, Jim," was Lemmer's reply, "but let thee and me thank the Lord as the issues of life and death arena in our hands."

CHAPTER XXIII

HUNGER BEGINS TO SPEAK

THE cold became more bitter as the day advanced. When the wind blows direct from the Peak Minvale knows how chilly its breath can be. Now and again there were whirling snowstorms, and men, who preferred to face the fierce blasts rather than sit in foodless and fireless homes, were pitiable objects. In less than a fortnight the world would be celebrating the natal day of the Prince of Peace. Donnimore smiled wryly to himself as he passed along the streets at the thought of Christmas. He felt sorry for the men he met, but he knew it was more monstrous misery for the women with no home of their own and with hungry children, and in most cases without that eternal hope that sustained such men as Lemmer and Boothroyd and others.

Donnimore, when he could spare an hour, went to see Adamson, who was assisting in the struggle. More than a score of the dispossessed Minvale folk had by his efforts been given shelter in his parish, and he ministered to their well-being. It was a relief to spend an hour with Adamson. Before his

flock Donnimore kept a brave and smiling face ; alone with Adamson he could relax and talk without shame of his burdens.

Whether or no it were the weather, the leaden skies, the biting cold, and showers of stinging snow, there was something portentous in the atmosphere on that day in which Plee was bereft of his wife. In the afternoon, as ill-fortune would have it, Mr. Slayter passed down the road from his house in conversation with two constables and entered the factory gates. He walked with proud and haughty step ; the angle at which he wore his hat seemed suggestive of defiance and inflexibility. It was the first time he had been seen to enter his works, and the news quickly spread from one group of shivering men to another. A stone struck the gate as he was about to enter, and as he and his guardians turned quickly round to see whence it had come there was a howl of derisive laughter from a group of men who were leaning against the bridge near at hand.

The hostile greeting stiffened his back and stiffened his spirit. He had become almost fanatical since his wife's death. It seemed to him that the eyes of England were upon him, watching to see if his spirit and his patriotism were great enough to hold the fort. In his breast-pocket he carried half a dozen letters he had received wishing him success, and he believed his *confrères* in Manchester were looking with bated breath on the struggle. He had to win a victory that would not only be a lesson to his recalcitrant hands, but to the forces of discontent

everywhere. "Before I give in," he had said to Bentley, as he returned from his wife's graveside, "I'd shut the works for good and retire. I mean to retire in about two years in any case, but I won't give in if it costs me every ha'penny I have." Bentley applauded his spirit, but in his heart was anxious for peace at almost any price. Not having a tithe of Slayter's wealth he felt the strain, but he also felt compelled to keep an implacable front to the world.

In less than an hour all Minvale knew that "Sam was inside." With the electrical condition of the moral atmosphere the news affected every one. Women with shawls over their heads left their houses and went into the bitter cold, and as twilight fell there was a crowd near the factory that blocked the road far over the bridge. Under the gloomy sky night came early that December afternoon, and still the crowd increased. When two men, one of whom was Shinding, came to the office door and peered out, a roar went up from the multitude that was heard inside above the whirr of machinery. Here was neither laughter nor humour, but grim, pale faces and vindictive tongues.

As it happened Brinton and Boothroyd came unexpectedly on the crowd. He and the others had been busy at a committee meeting, arranging the weekly dole, and though they had heard that the master was visiting his works they had been too busy to take further notice.

"Hello, Jack," said Brinton, "summat's up," and he hastened to the outskirts of the crowd.

"Well," he said, "are yo' all out tryin' to get a appetite? What's the to-do about?"

"Sam's gone inside," said a woman.

"Well, Mrs. Dean," said Brinton, "Ah should think it's too cowl to stand about even to look at such a handsome man as Sam."

"If Ah could get near enough to him he wouldna look handsome any longer," said Mrs. Dean, with passionate vindictiveness.

"Jack," said Brinton, turning to Boothroyd and speaking in a whisper, "do thee go back and tell owd Matthew and th' parson and any o' t'others tha sees to come here as quick as they can. Ah said times enough this business meant hell. Thee tell 'em from me it's hell here and now, and ax 'em to come quick. Find 'em somewheer, but bring 'em."

"Dost' think——"

"Ah'm sure, lad. Ah've seen one job o' this soort afore. Get on wi' thee, lad."

Boothroyd hurried away, and Brinton pushed his way into the centre of the crowd, laughing and joking, but meeting with no like response. He exerted himself to the utmost, but touched no responsive chord.

At last, with his hands in his pockets and whistling, he forced his way out again and waited for Lemmer and Donnimore. It was five o'clock, and in half an hour the gates would be open and the workers would come forth. He walked a little way up the road, and to his relief met Boothroyd returning with the vicar, Lemmer, and Ingham.

"See 'em?" he asked, pointing to the crowd in

the gloom. "We shall be wanted in two-three minits, and wanted bad, or Ah dunna know nowt."

Soon after five a body of police appeared and ordered the crowd to move on. But it was in no humour to obey, and the police did not attempt to enforce their order then. Half-past five came, the whirr of machinery ceased, and presently the gates were thrown open and the police set about clearing a passage. Instantly a wild yell came from the waiting crowd, and a volley of stones was flung at the workers who were coming out, causing them to shrink back appalled. "Send Sam out!" was the cry. "Send Sam out!" And then they called on the strangers to get back into the mill if they wanted to keep alive, and stones hurtled from the darkness again.

"Come along," cried Donnimore; "we must stop this—it is getting serious."

"Ah said it would be hell," remarked Brinton, as he followed.

The five men with some difficulty managed to reach the gates, where they turned and faced their followers. "My friends," cried Donnimore, with all the strength of his throat and lungs, and yet hardly making his voice heard above the din—"my friends, let me beg of you to keep calm. I know how you have suffered, but this will not help you. Do not——"

"Out o' th' road, mester," one interrupted; "it's no good yo' talkin' to-neet," and another advised him to go home, and there was another rush against the police. The five did their best to assist them

in withstanding the pressure, and for a moment Brinton made his voice heard. "If any chap, or any two of yo', wants to feight Ah'm ready—Ah'm spoilin' for a feight," he cried, ostentatiously unbuttoning his coat, but humour was in vain that night.

"Out o' th' road, Joe, thee and t'others, or you'll get hurt," fierce voices cried, and there was another savage rush and another volley of stones. Brinton put his mouth to Lemmer's ear. "Ah dunna know how it is, owd mon, but Ah reckon if it werena for thee and th' parson Ah should be helpin' 'em to-neet. Ah wanted thee here, Matthew, and now Ah wish tha were safe a' whoam." There was a brief breathing-space before there came another determined assault. Some of the police were hurt, and a stone struck Lemmer on the forehead, and he fell beneath the feet of the rioters.

Brinton, with an oath and an exertion of all his strength, pushed and fought his way to the fallen man, dragged him out of the mellay, and placed him, exhausted and bleeding, against the wall. The police had no thought now of clearing a way for the workers; it seemed more than they could do to keep the crowd from entering the mill-yard. Donni-more, while assisting to repel the attack, was imploring those nearest him to cease the horrid work, till a stone caught him on the lip and made speech above a whisper impossible. Brinton was swearing and using his fists with abandon against the more aggressive; but the defenders were becoming exhausted, and it was clear that in a short time they

must be overpowered, and with the crowd in the factory it was certain there would be blind destruction and perhaps murder.

Suddenly the attack wavered and then ceased. Word had been passed from the outskirts of the mob to the centre that the besieged were escaping from the engine-house by means of a ladder into Fidler's Road.

At once there was a rush for Fidler's Road. Slayter had escaped, and most of the girls and the male workers had just left the ladder when the mob broke in the road. A terrific yell went up, and with heated blood they gave chase. The workers broke and scattered with the mob on their track, and a great shout went up that in one group, flying along the banks of the Min, was Abram Shinding.

All who heard the cry ceased their pursuit of the aliens to give chase to Abram. It was almost dark, and that was in the fugitive's favour; but half a dozen young fellows, noting in which direction he was fleeing, leaped a wall and, racing across the fields, managed to bar the way. There were three beside Shinding, and they scattered when they saw they were headed off, and one of them leaped into the cold and turbulent waters of the Min and managed to struggle across. Shinding, appalled by the fierce cries of his name, attempted to follow, but Slaithwaite and a man named Christopher plunged in after him. "They've got him," yelled the nearest, and the cry was taken up and repeated down the straggling line of pursuers, and men and women ran to the spot till he was surrounded by

a crowd of more than a hundred. The master had escaped them, but here was the man they hated equally with him, and Abram's soul became as water as he saw the vindictive passion on the faces of the men and women who knew him. Some, as they came up, struck at him. "There's no Sam to help thee now," they cried. "Tha'd better have drowned theesel'."

Shinding had never had much manhood, and the little failed him now. "Dunna! dunna!" he cried! "do let me go—Ah winna go theer any moor if yo'll let me go. Ah couldna get out of it."

"Ay, tha shall go wheer Sam will soon follow thee," cried one woman, striking him over the shoulders of the men who had captured him. She was almost tigerish in her passion, but she had buried her one child two days previously, and the captured man in her distorted mind was a contributing cause to her bereavement.

"Here, howd [hold] on," said Slaithwaite. "We all owe him summat, and he's got to be paid gradely. Ah say duck him head first in the Min."

"Hurry up or th' bobbies'll be here," cried another.

All the while Shinding had been begging for mercy, and now his cry rose to a shriek. Half a dozen grasped him firmly and held him head downwards, and despite his struggles dipped him again and again in the river, the crowd laughing in cruel enjoyment at his grotesque antics and cries. At last he ceased to struggle, and they placed him on the bank to recover a little. His face was bleeding

where a stone on the river-bank had grazed it, and he was sobbing and gasping for breath. But the passions of his tormentors had not been assuaged. Cruelty is one of those appetites that grows with what it feeds on. Hunger was indeed speaking in Minvale.

"Here, Ah'll tell yo' what," said a woman. "He's washed pretty clean; let's tar and feather him."

"Ay, ay!" came a chorus.

"He'll be in a reet state then for his dirty work," shouted another woman.

"Ah know wheer there's a bucket of tar," cried a youth, and four willing pairs of legs hastened to fetch it. Meanwhile, that there might be no stay in his punishment, it was proposed to duck him again.

Shinding grovelled on the ground and cried inarticulately for pity, but he was taken up and plunged under water again. "Yo'd best throw him in and leave him in," one cried.

They brought him out to let him take breath, and then a woman, dishevelled and almost spent with a great effort, came running up. She fought her way through the crowd with blows and kicks. "Let him alone! let him alone!" she panted. "Yo've done enough; yo' shanna do any moor." It was Mrs. Shinding, and she went up and pushed violently at Slaithwaite and the other men and tried to drag her husband from their arms.

"Tek her away, someb'dy," said Christopher.

"Ah winna go; if yo' hurt him any moor yo'll

ha' to hurt me too," she cried, with quick pants for breath, standing on guard before the victim. And then she turned to pitiful entreaty. "Do let him go with me! Ah promise yo' he'll be better after this. Yo've done enough to him for this once; yo'll kill him if yo' done owt else, and yo'll be had up for murder. Ah know he's done wrong, but let him off now."

She looked into the hard faces round her with wildly pleading eyes and quivering lip. There was no response. "If yo'd let me tek him whoam," she added earnestly, "Ah promise yo' Ah'll leather him mesel'."

An English mob, even when fully roused, can seldom withstand the ludicrous. Slaithwaite, who well knew what the Shinding home had been, could not restrain a laugh, and all around caught the infection. There was a slight pause, and then the crowd hurried away, leaving Mrs. Shinding alone with her husband.

She tried to help him along, but he collapsed at her feet, and some minutes later two policemen who had come up carried him to the surgery. From fright and rough treatment he was in a deplorable condition, and later in the evening on Slayter's orders he was taken to Mossdale Infirmary. It was nearly a month before he was in a fit condition for discharge.

Believing that danger was over Brinton took Lemmer home. His forehead was cut and swollen and his limbs were bruised and painful, but he was not seriously injured. "It's th' beginnin', Matthew;

God alone knows what th' eend will be," said Brinton. "Th' empty bellies are beginnin' to speak, owd mon. Thee and me has heared 'em talk afore."

Lemmer nodded his head in acquiescence. "They'll be wiser to-morrow, Ah trust, lad."

"Ah hope so, but Ah dunna expect it. Ah dunna know, Matthew, why Ah were on th' side Ah were to-neet. Ah had to use me fists, and it were like feightin' agen mesel', and, by gum! if Ah'd seen Sam Ah believe Ah should have led 'em on. Ah've one word to say, Matthew—curse him! If he were hanged to-neet, it's better than he deserves. There's Josh's wife, and there's clemmed women and childer by scores wi' none a roof of their own to their yeads. And all for what? That Sam and Bentley may mek moor brass. Damn him!"

"Nay, nay, lad," said Lemmer.

"Tha prays for him, Ah know. Ah do, too—only none th' same road as thee. If Ah seed him to-neet nowt 'ould keep me hands off his throat."

Lemmer said nothing, for Brinton was gaining in anger every moment. They reached the house, and Brinton at first refused to go inside, but Lemmer was insistent for the younger man's sake. "Come and have a word with Josh," he begged; "th' poor lad needs it, tha knows."

"Well, Ah'll come in for two-three minits," he assented grudgingly.

A minute or two later came a knock at the door, and Mrs. Brinton opened it and walked in. "Is Joe here?" she asked. "Oh, Ah see tha art."

"Hello!" cried Brinton, his face clearing, but with no welcome in his tone. "And what meight thee be doin' here to-neet, lass?"

"Ah couldna stop away any longer, lad," replied Mrs. Brinton, with a pleading accent. "Ah've heared a lot of what's goin' on here, and my place is a' whoam. Th' house were all shut up, but Mrs. Waterman towld me tha'd tekken Matthew whoam. Ah hope yo' arena badly hurt, Matthew?"

"No, nowt to speak of," returned Lemmer.

"What doin's to be sure, and all Sam's fault!" said Mrs. Brinton, looking askance at her husband.

"Never mind Sam. Ah want to know who towld thee to come back here?" demanded Brinton.

"If tha's been hearin' how we've been enjoyin' oursels, what did tha come for? Any road, tha'll have to go back to-neet. Minvale's no place for thee just now. Hoo's lookin' badly still, mother?" turning to Mrs. Lemmer.

"Ah'm a lot better, but well or badly Ah shall stop, Joe," cried Mrs. Brinton, with a suspicion of tears. "Ah feel shamed of mesel' Ah ever went."

Brinton shook his head. "We're livin' on next to nowt here, lass, and afore th' week's out there winna be a roof to our yeads. It's no place for thee. Now, is it, mother?" appealing to Mrs. Lemmer again. "Ah've towld thee afore tha's pluck enough, but Ah can go through it a lot better, lass, if Ah know thee and th' childer are doin' all reet."

"Tha'll do better wi' me at thy side, lad, and Ah'm goin' to stop. Ah've left th' childer at Mellor."

"By gum ! tha's got a grain or two of sense left," retorted Brinton, with a return of humour. "If tha'll tek theesel' off agen to-morrow tha'll have moor."

"Ah shall stop, lad. Ah can stand what tha can. Tha doesna know what it's like at Mellor, wonderin' day and neet if owt's happenin' to thee."

Brinton turned with a feigned helpless gesture to Mrs. Lemmer. "Yo' talk to her, mother," he said.

"Ah will, lad. "Yo'll stop with him, my dear, and Joe owt to be very thankful as you want to."

"Ay, yo' women allus side with one another," retorted Brinton.

Plee was sitting in the corner staring in the fire, and had taken no notice of Mrs. Brinton's appearance. "Eh, Josh, lad," she said, "Ah'm sorry for thee above a bit. It's summat else to be put down to owd Slayter's account."

Plee did not reply, and Brinton signalled to his wife to say nothing more.

"Now yo're here yo'll stop and have a bit of supper," said Mrs. Lemmer. "There'll be nowt in yo'r house, Ah expect, Nance."

Before Mrs. Brinton could reply Brinton asked, "What is there for supper ? "

"There's only some cowl taters, lad. It's best we can do just now."

"If yo' were havin' beefsteak and onions or tater pie we'll stop, but as yo' havena we'll go whoam," said Brinton. "My wife's come back, and we winna celebrate it on cowl taters. Ah wish tha'd stopped away at any rate till Sam had turned me out, lass."

Tha'll cry thy eyes out, Ah know, when tha sees thy things chucked in th' street. Ah reckon," smiling at Mrs. Lemmer, "hoo'll cry to-neet when hoo sees how much hasna gone to th' pawnshop. We've been havin' fine times and tha's missed a lot—Ah wish tha'd missed it all. Well, good neet, yo' two—good neet, Josh. If Ah were thee, Matthew, Ah'd stay indoors to-morrow. This is nobbut th' beginnin'—what happened to-neet. Ah—— But theer, Ah winna start agen."

"What were it to-neet, lad?" asked Mrs. Brinton.

"Hell raised th' lid—tha'll be here to see it blow off, Ah reckon. Well, good neet, all."

"Ah wish tha'd stopped at Mellor, lass," said Brinton, when they were outside. "Tha's come back when things are at their worst. Except th' soup th' parson gives away and dry bread there's nowt. Ah wouldna stop in Matthew's becos they're hardly any better off."

"Ah dunna care, lad; my place is wheer tha art. Tha'll none hear me complain, Joe. Ah wish it were o'er, but dunna tek any account of me—dunna give in."

"Eh, what fools some of yo' women are!" said Brinton. It did not sound complimentary, but Mrs. Brinton knew what it meant.

"Ah've never been away from thee as long afore, lad, and Ah hope Ah never shall agen till Ah'm in th' churchyard. When tha were o'er at Mellor last Sunday week Ah thowt o' followin' thee that neet. Eh, Ah'm glad Ah'm back."

"Tha'll find fault wi' th' house and call it a pigsty, Ah reckon," was Brinton's reply. "But if Ah let thee stop tha mun promise me tha doesna start puttin' it to reets to-neet."

"All reet."

"Theer's one thing—tha'll none find much to put to reets. Th' chest o' drawers is gone, thy rockin'-cheer's gone, and a lot moor. Now, no sheddin' tears when tha gets inside or back tha goes."

"If there's only two cheers Ah dunna care—Ah'm back."

"If it werena for thy sake," returned Brinton, unlocking the door, "Ah dunna mind tellin' thee th' house looks moor like whoam when tha'rt in it."

Meanwhile, anger was being translated into action in the Minvale streets and lanes. Most of the workers were safe in their lodgings, but there was some talk of rushing the police and taking vengeance on those who had allied themselves with the enemy, though even hot blood was loath to face the truncheons. And then another suggestion was made. There were empty houses by scores unguarded that belonged to the tyrant. "A good bonfire would be warmin' this cowl neet," said one, and the suggestion was warmly welcomed. With shouts of approval the more truculent made off to Minview Road, where fifteen houses stood dark and tenantless. The doors and windows were smashed, the woodwork was hacked and splintered till it would burn, and then the waiting crowd saw a smoke from the windward house and a blaze that lit the interior. A yell of triumph went up. The wind was still

blowing steadily, and the whole row was doomed. Great clouds of smoke rolled along the Min, and the flames shot up and lighted the angry and vindictive faces.

But more police had been telegraphed for when the attack was made on the mill-gates, and the evening train brought them. They charged upon the mob as they stood watching the fiery destruction, and besides half a dozen prisoners there were many bruised heads and bodies in Minvale that night. Some fled to shelter at once; others, inflamed and reckless, from superior knowledge of the ground, would come upon the police from alley or byway, assault them with a shower of stones, and then flee to ambuscade them elsewhere. Efforts were made to put out the fire, but they were useless, and by midnight it had burnt itself out, after consuming the whole row.

But that was not the end of the night's work. Chased by the police, fifty or so of the boldest, headed by Slaithwaite and Westcott, stole off in the darkness for The Hollies. "He's left most o' us wi' no roof to our yeads; we'll leave him with none if th' devil hasna made it fireproof for him," said Slaithwaite.

It was half an hour past midnight when they reached the house. Mabel's dog barked furiously, and a fusillade of pebbles and gravel struck walls and windows, bringing Mr. Slayter from his study and the rest of the household from their beds. The police superintendent, who was a man of experience, had foreseen the possibility of an attack on the

house, and by his advice a loud clanging bell had been fixed up. It would, he pointed out, be not only useful in summoning help, but would probably scare any small body of rioters. The proceedings that night justified him. Maddened as they were, the rioters had not lost all discretion. They knew when they heard the clang of the bell that in a short time the police would be upon them in force and it would not be possible to burn the house or do serious damage. But for five minutes they flung stones and pebbles incessantly at the house and the windows. The lower windows were shuttered, but the bedroom windows and conservatory were badly smashed. Nevertheless, the marauders themselves felt that this was poor warfare compared with what had been done in Minview Road, and with a shout that the next night they would come and burn the house down they departed before the police came up.

Mabel did not get to sleep again that night. The police brought the news of the destruction in the village, and Mr. Slayter was beside himself with anger. They should pay to the utmost farthing, he declared. Mabel said nothing at the time, but at breakfast the next morning spoke her mind.

"Papa," she began, "how much longer is this terrible business to go on?"

Mr. Slayter disdained to answer her until she repeated the question.

"It's going on," he said, "till they give in. After last night I won't have some of them back at any price. By the New Year I can get all the hands I

want, and the present lot shall be turned out of the place. They are trying to frighten the wrong man."

"Papa, is it Christian? Cannot you see the horror of it? It"—with a quivering lip—"it killed mummy. We should be as violent if—if we and our families were starving. Papa, give them what they ask, and let the extra expense come out of what you intended to settle on me."

"There! that will do, my dear," he answered, in a less violent tone. "It's natural for women to take the sentimental side. Women are out of place in business. I am doing my duty, my dear, and I mean to do it. I have others to think about as well as myself."

"Papa, I lay awake wondering what my duty was. I felt that I could not stay here and share in these horrors, but mummy on that last day asked me to do all I could for you. Papa, I am sure it is wicked to make misery for the sake of a little money. What does it matter to us? We have money enough. If you gave them twice what they asked we should not feel the loss, and I am sure it would pay in making them contented."

"Donnimore again!" sneered Mr. Slayter. "You are repeating his sentiments like a parrot. Let me tell you this, my child—if it had not been for his action they would have given way long ago. I have written to the bishop about him, and I've written to Westgate too. If he is not removed I shall refuse to attend the church here or subscribe to it, and they might as well close it, as I said in my letter. I have had no reply yet, but if the fellow isn't moved

out of the parish I'll make it impossible for him to stay. A dangerous firebrand, that's what he is, as I told the bishop."

"Papa, you make it hard for me," returned Mabel, with flashing eyes. "But I tell you this—if I do not marry Frank I shall marry no one. I told him that I could not go to him without your consent, but I am reconsidering that, now you are so unreasonable."

Slayter flushed till his face was almost purple. "And I tell you this, Mabel—if you hold any communication with him again I shall disown you. As long as you are reckoned a daughter of mine you will never marry him, and that is my final word on the matter."

"Very well, papa," said the girl quietly; "I shall give no promise on the matter."

There was silence between them until near the conclusion of the breakfast, when the maid came to announce that Mr. Donnimore was in the hall asking to see Mr. Slayter.

"Tell him I can't see him," cried Slayter angrily; "and if he calls again at any time I am not at home."

The servant took the message, but came back in a few moments embarrassedly. "Please, sir, he says he must see you."

"Tell him I won't," said the master.

Donnimore had come with a stern determination to do his duty as a minister, and point out to this man where his obstinacy was leading them all. He had seen that morning the blackened ruins of the

cottages, he had heard of the attack on The Hollies, and his heart was sore and his mind anxious. He had come determined, in spite of any personal humiliation he might have to face, to bring Mr. Slayter's mind face to face with the facts. He turned away too sorrowful for anger. He had gauged the spirit of his parish and believed there would be no surrender. Some had gone elsewhere and obtained work, some would have yielded if they dared, but the bulk were not to be turned from their purpose. He and others had done what they could to keep angry passions in check, but hunger was beginning to speak, and the demons were unloosed. He went home and wrote to Slayter to tell him what he had meant to say face to face. His letter met with the fate he anticipated for it : it was returned unopened.

CHAPTER XXIV

A FUNERAL

It was a weary day for the leaders. The mob had taken the power out of their hands, and though individuals would be reasoned with, and would even admit that their conduct was impolitic, they lost their individuality when fused into a mob. Psychologists know that a mob is not a mere aggregation of individuals, but an entity, or, to use a chemical simile, not a mixture, but a chemical combination. Sulphur, oxygen, and water are all harmless, but chemically combined they are a biting, destroying acid ; and John, Tom, and Harry, whose life may be blameless, can be active agents of destruction when their individuality is lost.

The wind blew with less violence, but though the skies were leaden the air was keener, with the temperature below freezing-point all day. But the cold seemed a stimulus to violence ; there were police everywhere, and defiant groups everywhere. An attempt was made at seven that morning to assault the workers on their way to the mill, accompanied with threats of what would befall in the evening. Twice during the day the police had to charge the crowd, who had attacked them with

stones, and it was only after a desperate and prolonged fight that the workers were got to their lodgings in the evening, some of them being badly mauled during the journey. Minvale had by this time earned notoriety in the Press; the London papers had paragraphs about the little sombre town and its riots, and London unionists sent a hundred pounds for the fight. In the evening two score more police arrived. In twos and threes they patrolled every street and lane, yet three partially successful attempts were made to set fire to empty houses.

Donnimore was everywhere that day, imploring his flock to abstain from disorder. Lemmer, who was suffering from his bruising, save for a short time was at home all day, praying with a sad heart for his fellows. Plee wandered in and out of the house aimlessly, only speaking to reply to a question. When he came in he would sit in the death-chamber with his pocket Bible. He would rest for a little time and then would wander out again. Both Lemmer and his wife were anxious; his was a calmness that was unnatural.

Saturday morning came, and there was less disorder, though no less temper. The police were in overawing numbers, and men and women regarded them sullenly, but seldom went further than to shout opprobrious names at them. In the afternoon there was a crowd, chiefly of women and children, gathered near Lemmer's house, to witness the funeral of Mrs. Plee. Brinton and his friends were the bearers, and Donnimore was to read the service.

The crowd followed curiously but respectfully behind the mourners, noting and commenting on Plee's expressionless face as he walked beside his sister, who had come from Manchester to be present. This was the master's work, they said one to another : there was Mrs. Seddon lying dangerously ill, and her baby stillborn, that must also be put down to his account. "I'd dance if it were him they were buryin'," said one woman, and none thought of reproof.

Plee, it was noted, did not follow convention and take one last look at the coffin after it was lowered in the grave. Resentment was burning deep in his mind and slowly consuming him. His wife had been as truly murdered as if a knife had pierced her heart, and he looked on the faces in the streets and around the grave, and saw nothing but a sea of misery that was all the work of one man, flown with insolence and wealth, who cared not in his arrogance how others suffered, so that by not one jot or tittle his own comfort was lessened ; he was one of those who added field to field and barn to barn, regardless of the piteous cry of women and children, and the stricken hearts of men who were smitten through the sufferings of their dearest. His reading latterly had been of those tyrants who had mightily oppressed Israel, and he read with greedy satisfaction how all had been brought low. The truth was that prolonged suffering had been too much for him, and his mind was fast losing its balance. The Lemmers watched him with anxious eyes during the ceremony, and when it was over

they spoke to the brother and his wife from Grove.

"Ah wish yo'd persuade the lad to go back with yo' to Grove for a bit," said Mrs. Lemmer. "He isna well, as yo' can see, and hasna been for some time. Minvale isna much of a place just now, and he can do no good here."

"Get him to go back with yo', if yo' can," said Lemmer. "Ah've prayed ever since it happened, and 'specially to-day, that the poor lad meight be given the call to work. Ah tow'd him this mornin' that his dead lass, who worked so hard hersel' in this cause, would be best mourned for by doin' th' work as we all believe is righteous work. He agreed, and said he meant to work for her sake, but he only sits thinkin'. Ah'm feart for him. He's a good lad and he's been chastened sore."

"Ah axed him, when he coom over Wednesday, to stop wi' us, but he said No to it," the elder Plee replied. "He isna as he should be, it's plain. But we'll try agen afore we go back. It's been a knock-down blow for the poor lad; he were rare and fond of her."

"Next to his God he worshipped her," said Lemmer. "And he were reet; hoo were a good and gracious lass. Do yo'r best wi' him, for it troubles us to see him."

But Plee was not to be persuaded. His place was in Minvale, he said. Satan, he declared with a wild flash in his eyes, had his throne there, and he must be overthrown.

The funeral gave the authorities the opportunity

to convey the workers to the railway-station without the trouble they had been fearing. There were angry cries raised and a few attempts at hustling, but the bulk of the populace were in the neighbourhood of the church, and the imported hands got away scatheless. Some of them did not mean to venture there again.

When Minvale awoke on the Sunday morning it found that Nature had been busily at work through the long night. Nearly a foot of snow covered the streets and lanes, as if she were intent on blotting out for one day at least the wretchedness and evil that wallowed in the village. The hills around were clad in a dazzling robe of white samite; even the mill and bleach-works were touched into picturesqueness, and the ruins of Minview Road, from Lemmer's front door, had a mystic appearance. The church and the chapels were only attended by the faithful few, but the streets were full of movement all day, for the crisp, clear air was more enticing than bare and fireless rooms to the most home-loving. The day passed without any real disturbance, the snow seeming to deaden not only the noise of the streets but human passions also. All day the police were targets for snowballs. Some of them were inclined to resent it, but in the crowd it seemed to provoke good humour, and the superintendent remarked that, so long as snow was the only weapon, they could manage to get along.

In many places it is the custom on the first Sunday after a funeral for the mourners to attend

service at the church where it took place, and for the second time in his life Plee, in company with the Lemmers, attended the parish church. Donni-more preached from the text, "And on earth, peace, goodwill to men," but it was not one of his best sermons. He was physically and mentally weary with his incessant labours, and, he feared, a little spiritually weary too.

Mabel was present, and her eyes became moist as she noted his pale face and weary air. And then, as she lost herself in thought, her veins throbbed with a rush of glad blood. He could spend himself thus for others, could sacrifice ease and health, and brave even the wreck of love itself in a cause that he believed was the right. She heard nothing of the rest of the service ; she was idealising him into a hero that stood undaunted in the face of the world. And he was hers and she was his her pulses throbbed out as glad music. Her hands clenched and she raised her head proudly, her face aglow with high resolution. She would make herself worthy of him—worthy to stand by his side and be stirred, as he was, by heroic impulses. It was a definite act of self-surrender, and lo, it was sweet. She longed to cry out to the pale heavily-burdened man who loved her, and whom she had done her best to seduce from loyalty to conscience, and tell him that the travail of her soul had at last brought forth a woman. On the morrow she would begin to devote herself to alleviating the misery around ; she would forget her own sorrows in ministering to others ; she would spend herself as proudly reckless

as Frank himself. She had not really lived until this strike had come tearing and rending and destroying; at last she *was* a woman with a woman's heart and sympathies. How glad her mother would be to know.

Full of her purpose she hastened out to speak to Plee and his friends as they made their way to the graveside. "Mr. Plee," she said, holding out her hand, "I wish to express my sympathy with you in your great loss. I have just lost my mother, as you know, and so can sympathise with you." Plee did not take her hand, but stared at her, nodded curtly, and turned away.

"You munna tek no notice, please, miss," begged Mrs. Lemmer; "the poor lad is nearly off his head, and we are very anxious about him."

"I am very sorry for him," said Mabel.

"And we are sorry for yo', miss," said Lemmer. "Two good women have gone face to face with the Lord since this time last week."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Lemmer," cried Mabel, with tears in her eyes. "My mother *was* a good woman. I remember Mrs. Plee when she was in the post-office; she was a very pretty girl, and I am very sorry for her friends."

"She were as good as her looks, lovely without and within," was Lemmer's reply. "And perhaps yo' winna tek it amiss from an owd mon, but Ah should like to say wi' all my heart: God bless yo' and mek yo' like yo'r mother."

"Thank you, indeed, Mr. Lemmer; I hope I may be," she replied, looking into the faces of the

elderly couple. These were the two of whose self-sacrifice and quiet heroism Donnimore had told her, and the thought struck her that they were her superiors. And they were of sordid Minvale.

"Mester Donnimore," said Lemmer, as if inconsequently, "is a mon Ah've seen a lot of this last two-three weeks. Eh, but yo' could see by his face this mornin' what a feight he's bin in and what a soldier he's bin too. There's a tie 'twixt him and some of us as only death can break. Nay, death winna break it. Ah pray every day for his happiness and yo'rs."

"Mine, Mr. Lemmer?" She almost started with surprise. "Mine! Oh, thank you very much, Mr. Lemmer."

"We known, miss," interposed Mrs. Lemmer, with a smile, "as his happiness is bound up in yo'rs."

"Yo' winna tek it amiss if Ah say yor' a fortunit young woman. Eh, but yo'll have a husband as will be loved above a bit by his fellow-men, and that's a good thing that money canna buy. Yo'll excuse an owd mon, Ah hope, if Ah say another word. We're feightin' agen yo'r fayther, but Ah for one dunna bear him any ill-will. He canna see what's reet, or what we and Mester Donnimore thinks reet, but Ah hope for his sake and ours he may soon. We'd rayther be workin' for him on fair terms than feightin' him, and if yo'd tell him so much yo' meight be a peacemaker, and Ah couldna wish yo' better than that. Here comes Mester Donnimore, so we'll be goin'."

Mabel held out her hand impulsively. "I thank you both very much indeed," she said. "I hope there will soon be happier times in Minvale. I shall do my best."

As Lemmer and his wife turned away they came face to face with Donnimore. "And on earth peace and goodwill, sir," quoted the old man. "Ah hope the Lord'll send 'em to us in Minvale afore Christmas comes. Good mornin', Mester Donnimore, and if Ah were yo' Ah'd lie down this afternoon."

"I have been talking to your friends, Frank," said Mabel, as he took her hand—"or rather they have been talking to me, and wishing me happiness. Frank! what can I do to bring this misery to an end? This has been a terrible week."

"It has, dearest."

"I have spoken to papa again, but the only result was that he forbade my having any communication with you. What can I do? I wouldn't care how hard the task was if I could end it. You are killing yourself, my darling; you look extremely ill this morning. The Lemmers noted it too."

"The old man advised me to lie down this afternoon, and I almost laughed outright as I thought if ever a man ought to take his own advice this was the occasion. Don't trouble about me, dearest; I am young and strong. The last three days have been a great strain. I was afraid their misery might lead them to violence. They have been very patient, on the whole, and I hope the mad fit is over. But I am certain, my dear, that the bulk of

them will never yield, even if Minvale becomes a desolation. I came to your father yesterday to beg him to consent to arbitration as a golden bridge of retreat, but he refused me admittance, as you know, and returned unopened the letter I sent afterwards."

"Is there anything I can do, Frank? I am ready to do anything. I feel really desperate."

"I don't know of anything, dearest, unless you care to carry my suggestion to your father. You can suggest to him that it is a way out without appearing to yield, and it will certainly have the appearance of magnanimity. I will do my utmost to get the men to accept; indeed, I have spoken to Lemmer and Brinton, and they will fall in line, and I am sure we can influence the others."

"I'll do my best, but papa seems to get more stubborn every day, especially since mummy died. He has written a letter of complaint to the bishop and Sir James Westgate."

"Yes, and the bishop has written to me," said Donnimore, smiling. "I replied to it last night, and in it I asked him to write at once to your father and offer himself as arbitrator. If the bishop only will, I have great hopes your father will yield."

"Good-bye, dear Frank; I always feel more hopeful when I have talked with you."

Donnimore proposed walking part of the way with her, but she smilingly refused, telling him to take Lemmer's advice. She walked fearlessly homeward. A few irresponsible youths flung snowballs at

her as she passed, but that was the worst ; Minvale had separated father and daughter.

She sought out her father at once. He was sitting in the library reading a volume of recently published sermons. He had been very cold that morning when she announced that she was going to service at Minvale Church, and he did not raise his eyes when she entered the library.

She went at once to the point. "Papa," she said, "I have been speaking with Frank."

"That is how you regard my wishes," he returned, with extreme frigidity, without raising his eyes.

Mabel, however, was determined to deliver her message. "Papa, this is no time for—for trivial matters. You refused him admittance and did not read his letter. He wanted to beg of you to consent to arbitration. He is sure the men will be glad to arbitrate, and they are willing for the bishop to act if you will consent. Papa, you *must* consent. You cannot think of what Minvale has been this last week and refuse. For mummy's sake, papa, do consent. You can trust the bishop to do right."

"I shall not discuss the matter with you," he said, with the same coldness. "I refuse to discuss Donnimore or his suggestions, and please oblige me by not mentioning his name again."

"Papa, in a fortnight Christmas will be here. Do let us have peace if we can," and she went and sat on the arm of his chair.

He got up at once. "I should be glad if you would leave me—I am reading," he said.

She sighed, and left the room without another

word. He put down the volume and fell to reflection. He could not see how he could ever forgive Donnimore for alienating his child's affection. She had been a dutiful, happy daughter, who never interlered or even took much interest in business until Donnimore led her astray. Consent to arbitration! Why, he was winning hands down. By the New Year all his works would be in full going order, and his hands would have received a lesson they would never forget. For several days the evictions had been stayed, but before another week had passed all his rebellious subjects would cease to be his tenants. And then he drummed on the chair passionately. Here was he who had made Minvale, absolutely made it, and he dared not go outside his grounds without police escort or his life would be in jeopardy! He would conquer, no matter what the cost or how prolonged the battle, he had told his brethren on the Exchange, and he meant it. It was a duty he owed himself and his order.

CHAPTER XXV

EXURGAT DEUS

JOSIAH PLEE made no attempt to eat the frugal dinner placed before him, but drank a cup of weak tea and at once set out on a solitary ramble. He was a Sunday-school teacher, but he forgot his engagement for that afternoon. He crossed the Min, and, taking a footpath across the fields where the snow had not yet been trodden, gained the hills to the north of Minvale. The village lay beneath him, its nakedness hidden by its mantle of white fur. To the right of him was The Hollies, and he looked at it long with darkened face.

A thaw had set in, and the westerly breeze was icy cold, but Plee walked to and fro on the hill-top regardless of temperature. Ever and again he stopped to gaze on the village, muttering the while, and on one occasion as he looked he wept for its miseries. And then he drew himself up with fire in place of tears. Its woes were great and its people in travail, but deliverance would come, and he began to shout scraps of psalms that suited his mood.

It was dusk when he reached Minvale again. Mrs. Lemmer had kept the meagre tea waiting for him ;

he would not eat, but drank cold water. He was thirsty, very thirsty, he said, and drank again and again.

Mrs. Lemmer looked at him with troubled eyes. "He'll be badly afore long," she whispered to her husband; "he's feverish, Ah reckon, or he wouldna be drinkin' like this." And she turned to the young man and spoke with an accent of command. "Tha'rt none goin' to chapel to-neet, lad; tha mun stop here and look after th' house while we go. If Ah were thee Ah'd go to bed now."

He nodded, and they left him. "Ah hardly like leavin' him alone," said Mrs. Lemmer on her way to chapel. "Ah thowt o' stoppin' with him, only he'd rayther be alone. Ah'm goin' to see in th' mornin' he doesna get up till dinner-time. Ah dunna believe he's been gradely to sleep the last two-three neets."

"Poor lad!" said her husband. "Ah hope he may get to sleep now."

Plee sat in the unlighted house until the church bells ceased ringing, and then put on his hat and took Lemmer's stick and set off at a great pace through the melting snow. He passed Bricknoll and Slaithwaite, who asked him where he was going in such a hurry, but he took no notice; he was in a state of exaltation and his business was urgent.

A policeman was pacing up and down outside The Hollies, and he turned his lantern on Plee. "What's your business?" he asked.

Plee blinked in the rays of the lantern. "Ah want to have a word wi' th' mester," said Plee.

"My business is urgent ; Ah've been sent to him with a very pressin' message."

The policeman recognised him as a man whose wife had been buried the previous afternoon, and let him pass without further question. He had been stationed there since the night the rioters came, to guard the house against further attacks.

Mabel and all the maids save one had gone to church. Mr. Slayter was in the library smoking a cigar and reading a religious paper. He would not look at any secular paper or book on a Sunday, and when they were younger he had enforced the same restriction on his son and daughter. Mabel remembered a half-day she had to spend in bed with the bread and water of affliction for diet for reading *The Last of the Mohicans* one Sunday afternoon, and how she had spent her imprisonment with *Pride and Prejudice*.

Plee rang the bell at the side door. "Ah want to speak to th' mester," he said, when the maid appeared. "He knows me, and my business is urgent, tell him."

"What name ? "

"Josiah Plee, tell him."

The maid left him at the door while she went to the study. "Plee ? " said Slayter. "What is his business ? "

"He didn't say, sir, but he said it was particular business."

Mr. Slayter's face brightened. He knew Plee—knew him as one of the Dissenting leaders, and he read it as a sign of weakening. As Donnimore had

failed, Plee had probably been sent to ask for terms. He was glad of the opportunity to make plain to one of the leaders how near they were to defeat. He would make plain his terms to Plee—*instant surrender, or banishment from Minvale.*

“Show him in here, Lizzie,” he said, and presently Plee was ushered in. Mr. Slayter did not ask him to sit down. “Well, Plee,” he said, “I hear your wife is dead. I’m only sorry some of you did not count the cost before you made fools of yourselves. What brings you here to-night—I thought you couldn’t be spared at the chapel?” He could not withhold that sneer as he looked into Plee’s eyes. Unfortunately in his complacency he did not see what was there.

“Ah’ve come as Nathan went to David, mester,” said Plee, with more solemnity than excitement in his tone. “Minvale’s been made a desolation, women and childer have been cryin’ for bread, and the cry has gone up to th’ heavens, ‘How long, O Lord, how long?’”

“If you have come here in that frame of mind——” interrupted the master, but Plee paid no attention.

“Yesterday Ah buried me wife, as fair a flower as ever bloomed in Minvale. Hoo had long and happy years afore her, but hoo’s dead—kilt. And still the cry of Minvale goes up to heaven, and I say, ‘Thou art the man!’ Guilty afore men, guilty afore God, I have a message to thee, thou worshipper of mammon.”

At last Slayter saw what he had to deal with, but

it was too late. Crying for help, he tried to rise from the chair; but whirling the stout oak stick by the ferrule with both hands, Plee brought down the heavy knob on the head of the master. Slayter had raised one arm to ward off the blow, but though it slightly broke its force it did not save him, and he fell back into his chair with a groan. Plee gave him one glance, fell on his knees for a few seconds, and then walked out of the house, muttering stern Hebraisms with satisfaction. He bade the policeman a cheerful good night.

He had left the library door open behind him, and it was due to that that not more than twenty minutes elapsed before the maid found her master. Believing, when she saw the open door, that he must have left the room, she went in to tend the fire, and found him half fallen from the chair and, as she believed, dead. She ran shrieking to the constable outside, and sent him running for the doctor.

It was during the sermon that the verger went up to Mabel and led her from the church, where the news was broken to her by the doctor himself. Mr. Slayter was not dead, but he was seriously injured, and his recovery could hardly be hoped for.

She looked at him piteously. "Will you ask Mr. Donnimore to come to me as soon as the service is over?" The thought that there was Frank on whom to rely gave her courage and self-control, as she was driven back home.

Mr. and Mrs. Lemmer left the chapel as soon as



PLEE BROUGHT DOWN THE HEAVY KNOB ON THE HEAD OF THE MASTER.

the service was over. It was their custom to stay to the prayer-meeting that followed, but Mrs. Lemmer whispered to her husband that she wanted to get home. "Ah want to see if Josh is a-bed," she said. "If he isna Ah shall mek him some camomile tay and mek him go. He's sickenin', Ah can see."

When they did not see Plee in the living-room Mrs. Lemmer went upstairs to see if he had taken her advice. "He isna in, fayther," she said, in an anxious tone when she came down again. "Ah did hope to find him asleep. He's out trapesin' through this slush, feverish as he is."

A few moments later there came an abrupt knock at the door, and Brinton unceremoniously threw it open and walked in. Lemmer, as he noted Brinton's manner, and that Bricknoll and Ingham were on the doorstep, sprang to his feet with the sharp question, "What is it, lad?"

"Is Josh here?" asked Brinton.

"No, we left him here when we went to chapel, but he's gone out seemingly. Th' missus hoped he were lyin' down."

"Tha hasna heard th' news then, Matthew?"

"No; we hanna been whoam ten minits. What is it, lad?"

"Dunna thee say a word o' blame, Matthew; tha shanna say a word o' that soort in my hearin'. Tha's seen as well as th' rest of us as th' poor lad were three parts mad," said Brinton, in a tone that he was trying in vain to make unconcerned. "Well, he went out to-neet when yo'd gone to th' chapel

and went to th' mester and nearly kilt him. He hit him on th' yead wi' a stick while he were sittin' in his cheer. They thowt at first he were dead, but he's still livin'. And, by gum!" went on Brinton fiercely, "if it werena for th' poor lad's sake Ah'm glad, yo' two—Ah'm glad. Th' police will be on his track; but, owd mon, they shanna tek him if Ah can help it. They'll none tek into account that he were mad, because it's a mester. But Ah'm glad, and they shanna tek him. If he isna in Ah reckon Ah know wheer we can find him. Hast' a few shillin's about, Matthew? Ah wouldna ax for mesel', tha knows, and Ah'll see thee paid back."

"What dost' mean to do, lad?" asked Lemmer, who looked as if he were living at the rate of a year every moment, as he went to the cupboard.

"We shall get him away safe if it can be done any road," said Brinton, tossing back his head.

Lemmer put eighteen shillings in silver into Brinton's hand. "It's every penny we have, lad."

Brinton looked at them a moment or two before he replied. "It's some o' th' organ money, Ah reckon," he said slowly. "Ah shall tek it all—it's for him, if Ah find him. If Ah dunna Ah'll bring it back." He looked again on Lemmer, who looked so old and feeble, and then his gaze wandered to Mrs. Lemmer, who looked as stricken as her husband. His eyes came back again to the old man, and he placed his hand on his shoulder. "Get to thy prayin', Matthew," he said; "we all want it to-neet. Ah hope tha winna hear from me for another week or two," and he was gone.

Husband and wife sat quite still for some minutes without looking at each other. "Eh, mother, mother," said Lemmer at last, "th' poor lad, th' poor lad!"

"We can only do what Joe said," Mrs. Lemmer faltered out at last.

At that moment there came a peremptory knock at the door, and Lemmer opened it to a sergeant and a constable, who walked in.

"I'm sorry to trouble you," said the sergeant, "but I'm looking for Josiah Plee. Is he here?"

"No," said Lemmer. "We left him when we went to chapel, but when we got back he werena in, and we havena seen him since."

The sergeant looked at them for a moment. "Do you know what's happened?"

"Yea," said Lemmer falteringly, "we've just heard. Yo' can search th' house if yo' like."

"No, thank you," the sergeant replied. "I can take your word for it."

Mrs. Lemmer took a step forward and put her hand on his arm. "Th' poor lad's been driven mad," she said. "He only buried his wife yesterday, and he's none responsible. If yo' find him deal gently wi' him, will yo'?"

"You can be sure we will," said the sergeant heartily. "Don't worry yourselves—from what I've heard he must be insane, and he'll be treated like an insane person."

"Done yo' know how Mester Slayter is?" asked Lemmer.

"Hardly expected to live the night, I've heard,"

said the sergeant. "Well, good night, and don't worry."

Meanwhile, Brinton and his two friends were searching for the criminal on the hills. It was Slaithwaite from whom Brinton first learned what had occurred at The Hollies. "Ah were walkin' part o' th' road whoam wi' my brother Sam," said Slaithwaite, "and we met him just by th' corner o' Waine's Lane, and he were turnin' up it. It were dark, and I couldna see who it were till we coom close. Ah said, 'Hello, Josh,' but he didna speak, only waved his hand. It'd be just as he'd done it."

"He were goin' to'rds Hill-top then?" asked Brinton.

"Ay, he were up theer this afternoon. Bob Dean met him comin' down about tay-time."

It was that information which caused Brinton to lead his friends up the hill-side. "He's been up here a lot lately, they tell me," he said, as they toiled through the melting snow. "Ah'll tek my oath he hasna run away, and"—with a grim laugh—"Ah'll tek my oath he's goin' to when we find him."

It was a dark night, but now and again the heavy clouds would break for a few minutes, affording them fitful gleams from the slender crescent of the moon. As they neared the road that ran parallel to the top of the ridge Ingham laid hold of his companions. "Hush!" he said.

"Ay, it's him reet enough," said Brinton; "he's shoutin' out summat."

"Howd still a second," Ingham asked. "He's chantin' to Boyce's Chant."

Ingham, from familiarity with them, caught the words, and repeated the Prayer Book version to his companions : “ *Let the Lord arise, and let His enemies be scattered : let them also that hate Him flee before Him. Like as the smoke vanisheth, so shalt Thou drive them away : and like as the wax melteth at the fire, so let the ungodly perish at the presence of God.* ” “ Eh, dear ! ” as he realised the import of the words, “ he stark, starin’ mad.”

“ Ay, he is, poor lad, or he’d never hurt nob’dy,” returned Brinton.

They had come up with him. He was standing on a low wall with his arms outstretched, and was now shouting out portions of another psalm : “ *Lift up Thyself, Thou judge of the earth : render a reward to the proud.* ”

“ Hello, Josh,” said Brinton ; “ art’ keepin’ theesel’ warm, lad ? ”

Plee looked down on them, smiling, and then flourished his arm towards Minvale. “ Behold, I have wrought deliverance in Israel,” he cried.

Brinton pulled him down from the wall. “ Come with us, lad.”

“ Whither shall we go, my friend, when here is gladness and joy ? ”

“ Wheer there’s some gladness for thee, lad,” said Brinton, linking Plee’s arm in his, and making a motion to Bricknoll to take the other arm.

Plee suffered himself to be led away. For a mile or two he broke out again and again with snatches of psalms, but gradually he became silent and his gait became more feeble.

The country became more solitary and rugged as they advanced towards the frowning heights of Kinder. Brinton hoped to keep him hidden in the wilds of the Peak until the search was relaxed, and then get him away to America. He did not know how it was to be done with the funds he had, but he was resolved to do all he could to keep him out of the clutches of the law. His will had coerced Bricknoll and Ingham into aiding him in the wild enterprise.

"It's no good, Joe," said Bricknoll, when Brinton had gone to him. "They'll get him sooner or later, tha knows."

"Damn it all, Ah'm goin' to try. Wilt' see th' lad hung for that owd devil's sake, for th' want o' tryin'?"

"No, Ah winna," replied Bricknoll. "Poor lad! they'd never hang him, and him hawf mad."

"What! and Sam a mester! Sithee, mon, he's ended this strike for us, Ah reckon, poor lad, if th' mester dees."

"Ah'm thy mon, Joe. Ah'll go and tell th' owd woman, and then Ah'll be with thee."

"All reet. Dunna tell her wheer we're bound for—if hoo axes thee tell her London. Ah'm none tellin' Nance, for it'd nobbut mek her anxious."

Ingham also thought it was useless, but was ready to do anything, he said, and with a forethought that was characteristic took with him an old overcoat for Plee.

Gradually Plee's strength failed, and they had almost to carry him to the door of a lonely inn

they reached shortly after midnight. Brinton and Bricknoll knew the landlord, Jameson, whom they knocked up and asked for supper. Mrs. Jameson, curious to know what brought four men there at that hour of the night, also dressed and came downstairs and prepared a supper of bread and cheese and ale, and Brinton asked her for the kettle to be put on for hot whisky and water afterwards.

"What's up with him?" asked Jameson, pointing to Plee, who sat huddled and silent on a settle, with closed eyes.

"He's none well," Brinton replied.

Both husband and wife, it was plain, were consumed with curiosity, and presently Mrs. Jameson asked outright what they were doing so far from home.

"Look here, yo' two," said Brinton, "can Ah trust yo' to keep your mouths shut, no matter who comes axin'?"

"Yea," said Jameson, "of course yo' can." And Mrs. Jameson confirmed her husband's as-servation.

Brinton rose and motioned them to follow him into the passage, where, in a low voice, he told them all. "So yo' see," he concluded, "if yo' like to play foul yo' can send a feller-creature to th' gallows."

"He'll none come to th' gallows through us," said Jameson. "We've heared what's been goin' on in Minvale, and we wish yo' luck. Wheer are yo' goin'?"

"If yo'll let us sleep in yo'r stable to-neet we shall

go early in th' mornin', afore it's leet, up on Rock Tor yonder. Ah want yo' to put out some grub somewheer handy, so as Ah or one of us can fetch it at neet. Yo' can tek pay now if yo' like."

"We'll leave that," said Jameson. "There's none many'll break their hearts when they hear about owd Slayter."

"No, but it's th' lad we have to think about," said Brinton gravely. "He's a Methody, one o' th' genuine soort, but his wife deein' were too much for th' poor lad. But what will they care about a chap bein' out o' his mind when it were a mester he killed? It's a bad business, and Ah feel to-neet Ah'd rayther Sam had won than th' lad should ha' browt this trouble on hissel' and some moor. Done yo' know owd Matthew Lemmer?"

"Ay, th' owd local preacher, tha means?"

"Ay, that's him. He's fond o' th' lad above a bit, and Ah reckon this has near brokken his heart and his wife's too. A rare good soort is Matthew, though he does believe yo're swallerin' th' devil wi' every drop o' ale as goes in yo'r inside."

"Eh, Joe, we know th' owd feller well. He called to see th' missis when hoo were badly last year with inflammation o' th' lungs," said Jameson.

"Ah'd rayther see owd Matthew any day than any o' th' black coats," interpolated Mrs. Jameson.

Brinton smiled. "Ah tow'd him to his face t'other day he were a foo'. He and his missis have parted with all they have, brass and all, and he'd part wi' th' skin off his back, bit by bit, if he thowt he were doin' reet. Thee and me, Bill, arena th'

prayin' soort, but if ever tha wants to do owt big get one or two o' Matthew's soort on thy side. That is," with a smile, "if tha can find 'em, for they arena as common as blackberries. There's only one thing to mek Matthew's soort feart—that's doin' what they think's wrong. Th' poor lad theer is another when he's in his reet mind, though Ah got his rag out many a time about religion. But Ah munna stop talkin' ; let's have four stiff glasses o' hot whisky. Ah'm going to mek th' lad have one for th' first time in his life, Ah reckon. If tha doesna mind we'll tek a bundle o' straw with us in th' mornin' ; it'll be none too warm up yonder this weather."

To Brinton's satisfaction Plee drank the hot whisky without demur, and then they retired to the stable loft. Plee fell asleep almost immediately.

"Nowt like hot spirits for a sleepin' draught when a chap's none used to it," was Brinton's satisfied comment.

At five the next morning they arose. It was a difficult matter to arouse Plee, who seemed delirious with fever and almost too weak to stand. The trio perspired freely before they had got him up the steep. There on the wild moorland, where only mountain sheep sought for food, stood a shed built of rough unmortared stones with a turf roof, which they made their quarters. It was a wild and quixotic enterprise, but in spite of his sense of humour Brinton failed to see in it anything save a desperate attempt to keep a comrade from vindictive punishment.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE DETHRONEMENT OF THE MASTER

DONNIMORE hastened to The Hollies to help and sustain his beloved, over whose head another wave of trouble was passing. Her troubles were his, but in his mind was another thought of which he was heartily ashamed. If her father died the heavy clouds would break. He tried to thrust the thought from him as a suggestion of the devil that was humiliating to him.

Mabel was pale and agitated, but she was not now a helpless girl ; she had mastered herself before she reached home and had taken charge of the household. Donnimore took her hand and kissed her tenderly, but he made no attempt to express his sympathy in words. "How is he, dearest ?" he asked.

"Just alive, Dr. Tredell says," said Mabel. "He did not think it advisable to have him carried upstairs, and we have made a bed in the library. I have sent to Manchester for nurses, and we might possibly get them here soon after midnight. The midnight train stops at Otterspool, and I shall send the carriage there to meet it. But that poor fellow, Frank ; surely he was mad ?"

"I don't think there can be any doubt about it, dearest. He has been of great concern to some of us for a week or two past, and his wife's death, I believe, was too much for his reason."

"It was only this morning, as you know, I spoke to him in the churchyard, but he paid no attention. Oh, I am sorry for him and his friends, Frank. If papa should—— I suppose he will be put on his trial for it?"

"Oh yes, but don't let that trouble you. When it is seen what his mental state is he will be sent to an asylum. If he ever recovers his sanity I hope he will have no recollection of what he has done. Is there anything I can do for you, my darling?"

"I don't think so, Frank. I am not a good nurse, but I am doing what I can. Poor papa, I won't ask you to see him now because he is completely unconscious. I must send you away now, but I am so glad to have you here, my dear; your presence gives me courage."

His eyes and not his lips answered her again. "I shall come early in the morning to inquire," he said; "but if you should need me before then, send for me. I pray God may give you courage, my dearest."

It was late, but there was another house where he must show his sympathy. The Lemmers had not gone to bed, but were sitting with a light near the window—"in case the poor lad came back," Mrs. Lemmer had remarked with a quavering voice to her husband.

"I have just come from The Hollies," said

Donnimore. "Mr. Slayter is still living, but he is unconscious and, I am afraid, seriously injured. You and I know what state of mind poor Plee was in, and so does Miss Slayter. In spite of her own sorrow she expressed her pity for him."

"Ah'm very glad, sir ; it would ha' been excusable if hoo were feelin' bitter agen the poor lad," said Lemmer. "We've been thinkin' it o'er, as we sat here, and thinkin' about th' things he's said, and we truly believe he'd got it into his head as the Lord wanted it done and he were doin' th' Lord's work. It shows how far his mind were off bein' reet. Eh, sir, as we've sat here to-neet, waitin' for th' lad to come in, Ah've felt as th' price were a lot too great. Ah've been so downcast as Ah couldna help wonderin' whether we'd done reet or not to strike at all. Ah'm very sorry for th' mester and his dowter—what a lot of trouble hoo's had too ! And th' lad—we've both been very fond o' th' lad, and Ah canna see clear to-neet or think reet—Ah've got th' feelin' in me heart as if Ah'd been th' Lord Ah could ha' ordered things better. Ah know it's th' devil in me, sir—he's havin' a good innin's in Minvale all roads."

"It is a pitiful business altogether, Mr. Lemmer," returned Donnimore. "I have felt, too, in my depression that the price was too great, but—It was you, Mrs. Lemmer, who said it was costly to get right done. Do you know where Plee is now ?"

"Ah dunna, sir ; we were waitin' up in case he coom in. Joe Brinton were here a while since wi' Tom Bricknoll and Bill Ingham. He said he were

goin' to try to find him and keep him out o' th' hands o' th' police, if he could. Ah couldna tell him just then it were wrong, sir ; and if Ah had it wouldna have made any difference. Yo' meight as well try and turn th' hills into dales as try and turn Joe when he's wound up. He said he hoped we shouldna hear owt about him for a week or two."

A ghost of a smile crossed Donnimore's face. "How like him, Mr. Lemmer ! Do you know, I like Brinton ? "

Lemmer's face also relaxed slightly. "Eh, sir, Ah've prayed for Joe's conversion this many a year. Done yo' know, Ah'd rayther be with him sometimes than with some professin' Christians. But Ah canna think he's doin' any good by tryin' to get th' lad away, and Ah feel anxious."

"We will hope and pray for the best," said Donnimore. "I'll see you in the morning."

At midnight Mr. and Mrs. Lemmer, believing that Plee would not return that night, went to bed. But the old man could not sleep. When his wife slept a little he quietly got up and went downstairs to ease his mind by laying his burden elsewhere. In the early hours of the morning Mrs. Lemmer found him absent and went downstairs to him. "Come to bed, fayther," she said, "or tha'll be badly. If tha'rt asleep the Lord'll be awake."

"Eh, mother ! " he said in a tone of deep emotion, and followed her obediently.

Tumult and disorder had died in the Minvale streets. With the thaw came a day of keen air and

bright sunshine which was welcomed after a week's continual gloom, and subdued groups stood in the streets discussing and speculating, and feverishly anxious for every scrap of news from The Hollies. Half a dozen times during the Monday it was reported that the injured master was dead, but each time messengers were sent to view the house and see if the blinds were down, and when they returned Minvale knew that not yet could Plee be indicted for murder. Two nurses and a specialist had arrived from Manchester, and the day passed with the certainty that he was still living. It was known that the police were searching for Plee, and there were rumours that he had been arrested at Stockport, at Manchester, and other places. A few knew that Brinton had taken him off, and under a pledge of secrecy the news spread until it reached the police.

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday passed, and still the village was in suspense. Plee had not been found, and the master was still living. It was not until Friday that there was any definite news. Late that afternoon it became known that two specialists, one from London and one from Manchester, had met in consultation that morning and had delivered a gloomy verdict. Mr. Slayter was not likely to die from the effects of the blow, but it had so injured his brain that his mental faculties, they feared, were permanently impaired—physically he would be alive, mentally he would be dead. He had been conscious for two days, but he could only babble like a child or an old man in his dotage.

It fell to Donnimore to communicate the verdict

to Mabel. For the first time during the week she broke down and relieved herself by tears. "Oh, Frank, poor papa! To live, and never be a man again! It is cruel, unspeakably cruel! It would not have been half so terrible if he had died."

"That would cause another death, my dear, I am afraid," he said, as she rested her head on his shoulder.

"Whose? Oh, Plee's. Surely not, Frank? In any case they cannot punish an insane person."

"I hope not," said Donnimore. "But if he were only temporarily insane——"

"Oh, I don't know what I wish, Frank, but I am so weary."

"I know, brave heart. You have had to endure much. Now I am going to be a doctor. Now you know the worst, you cannot do any more, and you must go to bed at once, to stay there at least twenty-four hours."

"Oh, dear, I cannot."

"But you must. I insist. It is my selfishness, for I do not wish you to be ill. Now, obey at once."

CHAPTER XXVII

IN CONVERTENDO

WITH a dose from Dr. Tredell she managed to sleep well, and arose the next morning but one fresher in body and mind. Donnimore called soon after breakfast. "Now, my dear," he said, "you see you are more fit to talk about the business that rests on your shoulders. I have sent a cable to your brother asking him to get leave and come home if possible, but until then you are your father's representative. I don't know what your brother's opinions are, but at present you are sole master and mistress here. Well, dearest, why not end the strike and all its horrors at once?"

"End the strike?" she echoed, looking at him in surprise. "What do you mean, Frank?"

"I must confess, my dear, that it was not until yesterday morning that it occurred to me that you were now the arbiter of Minvale's fate. Your father is now incapable of business, and, if the physicians are correct, always will be, and until your brother returns you are the owner of the works. Why not meet the men's leaders, come to terms with them, and let them resume work? I can

answer for it that you will find them reasonable. It is not a dream, but really possible that with Christmas we can have peace and, I hope, goodwill."

Mabel's face flushed. "Oh, Frank, I never thought of this; it never struck me that all rests upon me. What a responsibility!"

"A week ago, my dear one," he said gently, "you were asking me what you could do to end the misery and horror. None of us could foresee that in so short a time everything would rest upon you. But it is so, painful as are the circumstances that have brought it about."

"Poor papa," said Mabel, with tears on her cheeks. "I see what my duty is, but as he lies there helpless it seems almost like treason to him."

Donnimore said nothing; he could follow her train of thought and could sympathise with her.

"Frank," she said, after a pause, "I am going to papa now. You may think it silly, but, though he cannot understand, I am going to tell him what I intend doing."

Donnimore inclined his head in assent. "You have made up your mind, then, dearest?" he asked.

"Frank, do you suppose I could allow this misery to last longer? Wait for me here, please."

She asked the nurse to leave her alone with her father for a few minutes. Mr. Slayter had been carried upstairs, and was lying on the bed propped up with pillows. His face was pale, his eyes bright, and his glance wandered restlessly round the room, but without intelligence. The previous day he had been laughing and singing with the inconsequence

of a child, but this morning he was in a peevish mood.

"Papa," said Mabel, taking his hand, "do you know me?"

He looked at her peevishly. "It's Molly Harden," he said. "Molly with the carroty hair. Where's George gone?"

"No, papa; I'm your daughter Mabel. Don't you know me?"

"Of course," he replied, in the same peevish tone.

"Papa, I'm going to give the men what they ask in reason," she said. "Your men at the works."

"Confound it; give me something to eat!" he cried angrily. "Why do you keep me clemmed like this?"

With a slight sob she gave him a biscuit, rang for the nurse, and went back to Donnimore. "Of course he did not understand, Frank. It is pitiful to see him lying so helpless," and she wept a little.

Donnimore stroked her hair as she leaned her head on the table. "You have had heavy burdens to bear, my dear," he said, "but you cannot tell how thankful I am that your shoulders have broadened."

She smiled a little wearily. "I owe it to you, Frank—you and mummy. I felt very rebellious when mummy died, but I am glad, dear, that she was spared all this."

"Yes; her gentle heart would have been sorely bruised in the happenings of this last week. Have you decided about the strike?"

"Of course, dear. I want this horrible time over as soon as possible."

"I'm so glad, my darling—glad and proud that you should be the one to give peace. You had better meet the committee at once, then. This afternoon?"

"If you like, Frank."

"Here?"

"No—o; I'd rather it wasn't here. Have you any objection to our meeting at the Vicarage?"

"I shall be very pleased. I'll communicate with the committee at once—what are left of them. We'll say three o'clock."

"Yes; I'll be there. Do you think the police have any idea where Plee and his friends are, Frank?"

"I don't know."

"Frank, if you aren't sure they will treat him as insane, I wish they could get him safely away. If it is a question of money, and you could——"

"That is a kind thought, but I don't think it wise, dearest. Well, at three o'clock then."

She rested for a moment or two in his arms. "Oh! I am glad, glad beyond speech, that I have you, Frank. I could not have borne all this without you."

Donnimore smiled. "That is my feeling about you, dearest. But be of good cheer; happier times are coming. We will do our best to make Minvale a happier place than it has ever been."

Donnimore, wishing that Mabel herself should be the bearer of good news, and afraid he could not keep it a secret if he saw the leaders, did not visit

the village, but sent a messenger to the remnant of the committee asking them to come to the Vicarage that afternoon on important business. He gave no hint as to what the business was, and Lemmer, Boothroyd, and Slaithwaite were a little surprised when they found Miss Slayter was present. She greeted them and shook hands with them, greatly to the embarrassment of Slaithwaite.

"Eh, miss," said Lemmer. "Ah've been wantin' to tell yo' how sorry we are for yo'r trouble and th' way it were browt about. How is th' mester to-day?"

"He is recovering physically, Mr. Lemmer, but his mind, we are afraid, is permanently injured."

Lemmer's face became more careworn. "We heared it were so, miss, but hoped it meightna be true. Ah'm very sorry, miss; in fact, we're all sorry. But Ah hope"—his look was very pathetic—"Ah hope yo' winna think any harder o' th' poor lad as did it than yo' can help. Done yo' see, miss, he were out o' his mind at th' time. Ah've known him ever since he were breeched, and owt o' th' soort were not in him if he were in his reet senses. In his reet mind it'd be terrible to him to know what trouble he'd browt yo'."

"I don't think badly of him, Mr. Lemmer. I know what he had to bear made him insane."

"That's it, miss," returned Lemmer gladly. "Eh, but Ah am glad to hear yo' say it. Th' lad's been very dear to us, and it's lyin' very heavy on my missus's heart. Ah hope and pray that th' mester may recover altogether."

Mabel nodded, and Donnimore spoke. "Miss Slayter wished to meet you here this afternoon to discuss your grievances. You see, now Mr. Slayter is not able to attend to business the duty falls on her."

"Ay, so it does," muttered Boothroyd, and looked hard at her.

"What is it you want, Mr. Lemmer?" asked Mabel. "What would satisfy the men?"

Lemmer, under stress of emotion, spoke with difficulty. "Done yo' see, miss, we axed th' mester for a ten per cent. rise all round. Yo' see, it was due to us when trade begun to mend, for he'd promised it."

"Would you accept it now?" asked Mabel quietly.

"Yea, Ah believe we all would gladly, miss, if it could be done. But, done yo' see, some of us have been turned out of our houses."

Mabel looked at Donnimore for encouragement, and answered Lemmer, "If you will accept the ten per cent. you can go back to your houses as soon as you like. To-morrow the strangers shall be paid off and sent away. When would you like to start work again?"

No one answered her; they were trying to realise it.

"Mr. Donnimore will act for me and make all arrangements, I know," Mabel went on. "Some of the houses want attending to, but that can stand over for the present. Can you start on Monday, do you think?"

Tears were running down Lemmer's cheeks. "Eh, Miss Slayter," he said brokenly, "me heart's too full to say much. We are like them that dream. Ah could say our mouth was filled wi' laughter and our tongue wi' singin' if it werena for—— But Ah do say wi' all me heart, 'God bless yo', God bless yo'."

"I hope this misery is ended at Minvale for ever, Mr. Lemmer," said Mabel, whose eyes likewise were moist. "But let me ask you one thing. Try not to think too hardly of my father."

"We winna, miss," cried Lemmer; "we couldna and him lyin' theer. We've been feightin' agen him because it were as bad for him as it were for us. Eh, what news this'll be in Minvale to-neet, miss—eh, what news! God bless yo' and give yo' soon the desire of yo'r heart. Yo'll excuse us, but we mun go and tell th' news at once. Eh, what a neet it will be! There'll be a lot o' blessin's axed on yo'r head to-neet, miss; and, after all, it's better to have blessin's axed instead o' curses. Ah should like to tek yo' with us and let yo' tell th' news yo'rsel'."

"Not to-night, Mr. Lemmer," said Mabel.

"Well, good day, and God bless yo'. Yea, and yo' shall be blessed."

Mabel and Donnimore shook hands with the delegates as they left. "I shall be with you," said Donnimore, "when I have seen Miss Slayter home."

The weather, which through the long weeks had seemed to be on the side of the master, suddenly

tried to dampen rejoicing. The committee left the Vicarage in the face of a south-west gale, and before dark a drenching rain swept through the Minvale streets. But men, women, and children paid no heed to the weather. For a little time all were more surprised than delighted; victory had come so suddenly that they could not realise that the fight was over, that on the Monday morning they would go to the mill and print-works and labour and earn wages—only better wages than before, and, best of all, would be back in their own homes. Even on the morrow they could begin to take possession, they said to each other with doubtful expression, as though it were not really possible. They would ask “Mester Donnimore” if there would be any objection.

By six o'clock joy had ousted surprise. All who were able were in the streets, wet through but happy, shaking hands with each other and laughing, and many women quietly crying now the long agony was over, and they could give their children more than starvation diet, could redeem the furniture and clothing they had pawned, and pay the tradesmen, who, on the whole, had stood nobly on their side. There were some who could not rejoice; their dead had been left on the field of battle, or their dearest had come out of the campaign wasted and infirm by sickness. From this home and that a child had been carried that would never return; there was more than one empty house to which no mother would go back. Of the tears shed in Minvale that night all were not tears of joy.

War in the state or the town or the home is always costly.

They awaited Donnimore's appearance in a dense crowd, and there was a great scene when he came. They welcomed him with repeated cheers and followed him, shaking hands with him, slapping him on the back, and singing that great English compliment, "For he's a jolly good fellow," and wishing him luck.

"Ah hope the weddin' 'll be soon, sir ; we shall be theer," Mrs. Bricknoll cried, and the rest took up the cry. He walked bare-headed through the streets with a glad heart.

"You had better see about getting back to your houses to-morrow," he said, "and don't catch cold to-night. And to please me, let those workers depart in peace to-morrow."

"We'll cheer 'em if that'll please yo'," one answered him, and those around affirmed it.

They cheered and shook hands with Lemmer and Boothroyd and Slaithwaite. Lemmer tried to respond to their mood, but could not, and when one said he did not look as pleased as he ought, he replied with a quaver that he was very glad for all their sakes, but he could not help thinking about somebody else. They understood and let him alone.

He went home as early as he could. He and his wife had never been demonstrative in their affection, but when he had taken home the news that afternoon she put her hands on his shoulders and kissed him. "Eh, fayther," she said, "thank God it's come at last."

“Ah’m thankful, lass—th’ Lord knows Ah’m thankful; but Ah canna keep a smilin’ face just now. It’s been bowt dear. Ah dunna believe in as much as Ah did afore—and that were little enough; but all th’ same, Ah hope if th’ call coom Ah should fall to agen.”

“Ay, fayther, Ah know tha would. We faced summat together years since, and we can face this,” and the portly Mrs. Lemmer drew herself up, and the spirit of undaunted resolution shone in her eyes. The mothers of England—how stout are some of their hearts!

Neighbours called in to speak of the wonder and to talk over the great fight, and to dwell fondly on the coming visions of peace and plenty. It was a great night.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HOW BRINTON HELD THE FORT

THE news of the triumph did not reach the fugitives in their refuge, and, if it had, Brinton would not have weakened in his purpose. The hut was a shelter at night, but they spent most of the days in a hollow of the rocks, where they could have a fire and shelter from the bitter wind.

It was only by persistent effort that they were able to get Plee to the refuge, and there he collapsed. Before the morning had passed he sank into unconsciousness and delirium, and it was painful to his friends to hear him holding an imaginary conversation with his dead wife in thrilling accents of love and devotion. "Ah hope wi' all my heart th' lad dees," said Brinton, as he watched, and now and again he spoke to the sick man to see if he could answer rationally. In the evening he sent Ingham down to Jameson's for more provisions and a bottle of whisky. Neither he nor his companions had the instinct of nursing, but Brinton, beside giving Plee a bed of straw to lie on, had covered him with more, and patiently put it on again when the unconscious man in his restless tossings disarranged it. It was pathetic and grotesque, when the whisky came, to

see Brinton, when in doubt as to what to do next, take up the bottle and force a little of the spirit down the patient's throat, and always with the same remark, delivered forcibly : " Ah hope he may dee." Ingham expressed his misgivings regarding the whisky treatment, but Brinton's reply was that it was kill or cure. " And Ah owt to let him dee," he added.

Bricknoll and Ingham slept during the night; Brinton dozed, sitting with his back against the wall of the hut near the sick-bed. A day's reflection had convinced the former pair that it was a foolish enterprise, and when they were breakfasting Bricknoll spoke to Brinton. " It seems to me, Joe," he said, " as this is no place for th' lad as he is. He owt to be in a infirmary, tha knows."

" He owt," replied Brinton. " But in a infirmary he'll be in th' bobbies' hands. Sithee, lad, Ah hope he may dee, but as long as he lives we're goin' to try and keep him safe. Ah wouldna let our cat be hanged for Sam's sake. Would thee ? "

" No," said Bricknoll.

" If yo' two think it worth while Ah'll cut across to-neet to Dr. Bockly down at Torswell yonder. He's a sportsman, is Bockly, and Ah could get a bottle of physic from him and he'd say nowt. What done yo' say ? "

" We'll see how he goes on to-day," said Ingham.

" Ah'll go and give him a sup o' whisky now," said Brinton.

They did not dare to express their minds more directly, but Brinton intuitively felt their lack of

warmth. He was a general who amid the distractions of a campaign had to hearten and encourage his lukewarm underlings. Never, to all appearance, had he been so full of life and spirits. He spoke as though Fortune had been kind in sending them on such an expedition. He had always longed from a boy, he declared, to live the free and careless life of the open, but that was the first time the opportunity had come his way. "By gum, lads!" he said, "if Ah had plenty o' brass Ah dunna believe Ah should go back. Nance 'ould grumble, but hoo'd come willin'ly; if Ah chose to live in a coal-pit hoo'd mek her whoam theer as well as in a palace, and hoo'd be scrubbin' th' coal every day and grumblin' because hoo couldna get it white, same as hoo does at Sam's ramshackle hut we live in when hoo canna mek it dacent. Ah werena cut out to work in a bleach-works, but Ah shall have to go back, Ah reckon."

Bricknoll grunted. "How would tha get on for a ale-house, mon?"

"Theer tha has me, lad," Brinton replied, with a laugh. "Ah should miss th' Wheatsheaf; but then think o' th' advantages of none havin' to listen to yo' chaps neet after neet! Beside, Ah could slip down to Jameson's yonder for an hour or two every neet. Nance wouldna mind bein' left alone up here. Hoo's got th' childer and hoo'd have th' hut to see to and scrub, and, besides, hoo's used to it. What a grand thing it is, mon, as thee and me have browt up our missuses to spend their time a' whoam. Bill," turning to Ingham, "it's

a wrinkle for thee when tha weds Lucy Blackwell. A woman's proper place is in her house, and a man's place is wheer he likes. It teks a woman some time to see it, but it's worth learnin' her."

Bricknoll smiled sourly; Ingham laughed, recognising the ironic.

"Nance 'ould stay up here while I went down yonder," went on Brinton. "And what a good thing it 'ould be for her! Hoo couldna go runnin' in and out o' other folks' houses up here, jawin' to no good. A wife as gossips is a wife marred, thee bear in mind, Bill. A proper wife only wants to talk to her husband and childer—a man can do all th' talkin' outside th' house as is needed."

"Oh, dry up, Joe," said Bricknoll, who was a little uncomfortable.

"Ah'm only givin' Bill some good advice," said Brinton, but he changed the subject. He told them his most amusing stories; he made a football out of a bundle of hay and opposed the twain for threepence a goal, a penny to be paid down and the balance in better times. He lost repeatedly and feigned disgust thereat, but the hollow rang with the laughter of his comrades. He congratulated them on being out of the wretchedness of Minvale for a few days; their excursion would be as beneficial as a week's visit to Blackpool, he averred, and dirt-cheap. Brinton had a touch of greatness that week.

Plee was apparently no better when night came, but Brinton did not go to Dr. Bockly. "He'd say," he explained to his companions, "that we owt to

get him somewheer else, and be givin' us a bottle of physic for him. As for th' first, he stops here till we can get him safe away ; and as for th' physic, Ah reckon th' whisky's better. It wouldna," with a smile, "be much use to thee and me, Tom, if we were lyin' this road ; but Ah reckon th' poor lad never knowed th' taste of it till last neet, and that meks it a stronger physic for him than any a doctor could give him. If owt'll cure him th' whisky will."

He sent Bricknoll and Ingham down to Jameson's to see if there were any news, he said, but in reality to give them the change they were craving for. It was near midnight when they returned, and Bricknoll had indulged himself a little too freely. There was no news, was Ingham's report. Jameson had heard that the master was dead and had also heard he was not, and the police as yet had made no inquiries.

Plee slept during the night and Brinton could not keep awake. It was a cold night, with frost, and they huddled together for warmth.

Bricknoll awoke sore and peevish, and muttered his discontent to Ingham ; but with breakfast and welcome sunshine, which made the hollow comfortably warm, he became more cheerful. Plee had slept, as far as they knew, all through the night, and after Brinton had dosed him with whisky about daylight he fell asleep again. They spent the morning in the sunshine comfortably enough.

Plee lay unconscious all day, though it seemed to the unskilled watchers that he slept a good deal.

At any rate, there was now no babbling of delirium, and Brinton administered whisky at intervals with a gloomy air. "Th' whisky's doin' him good, Ah do believe," he said. "Ah'm blest if Ah can mek up me mind whether Ah owt to ha' tried to cure him or not. Ah wish he'd dee now, but Ah couldna find in me heart to let him dee without tryin' keepin' him alive. What dost thee say, Bill?"

"Tha'd no reet to let him dee, Joe, if tha could keep him alive."

"That's just what Ah feel, lad. But, sithee, Ah should be glad above a bit if he deed to-day. It meks me mad past all tellin' to think of him or anybody bein' hung for Sam's sake."

"They wouldna hang him," interrupted Bricknoll.

"Why, lad, if they dared, they'd hang us all for darin' to strike. Th' rich stick together through thick and thin—what a change it'll be when us soort o' chaps stick together th' same road!" He turned to the sleeping patient. "Josh, lad, dee. If Ah were one o' owd Matthew's soort Ah should be on me knees all day prayin' that tha meight."

"Ah've been wonderin' if he is dead," said Bricknoll, referring to the master.

Brinton shook his head. "If he isna yet he soon will be; th' doctor reckoned he couldna get o'er it. Look here, Bill," to Ingham, "when it begins to get dark tha mun mek thy way back whoam. Stop indoors till to-morrow, and when it gets dark come back with what news there is and two-three bob if tha can get it. And bring some bacca."

"Ah'll go," said Ingham, and at four that

afternoon he started off. Later in the evening Brinton allowed Bricknoll to persuade him to go down to Jameson's for half an hour. There were other customers in the inn kitchen, and they crept round to the back door and waited.

Presently Jameson came out. "Hello," he said, "is it yo'? Look here, a bobby has been here this afternoon axin' if Ah'd seen any of yo'. Ah put him off, but Ah'd rayther yo' werena found on our premises. Ah meight lose me licence, yo' know."

"It shanna be lost through us. Get us some grub and we'll skedaddle now."

"It's me livin', done yo' see," said Jameson, as an apology.

"Oh, tha'rt reet. Have some grub ready for us to-morrow neet in th' stable, and we winna come to th' house."

The next morning, when Brinton returned to the shelter after lighting a fire outside for breakfast, he was startled to see Plee staring at him with a rational light in his eyes. "Hello, Josh, lad," he said.

"Hello, Joe," was Plee's feeble answer. And then he raised his arms. "Ah feel badly," he said.

"Tha art badly, lad. But wait a minit and tha shall have some hot tay. Th' kettle's nearly boilin'."

"Wheer are we?"

"We'll talk about it when tha's had some breakfast."

"Wheer are we, Joe?"

"Well, if tha mun know, we're none far from Kinder, tekkin' a bit of a holiday, lad," Brinton replied, with reluctance

"Joe," asked Plee, with an anxious face, "what has happened? Do tell me."

Brinton hesitated a moment. "Well, dost' see, lad, tha went off thy nut a bit and—and had a feight wi' Sam, and—and tha had th' best o' it; so we thowt, Tom Bricknoll, Bill Ingham, and me, tha'd better be here out o' th' road for a bit. Ah reckon," as another ingenuity occurred to him—"Ah reckon th' mester must have hit back pretty free, for tha's bin near death's door for a day or two."

Plee put his hands before his face. "Eh, Joe," he said; "Ah thowt it were a dream—Ah thowt it were a dream. Did Ah hit him with a stick?"

"Ay, and a good job too."

"Is he dead?"

"He werena yesterday. But dunna thee trouble about theesel', lad; they're none goin' to get howd o' thee."

Plee did not reply for a little time. "Joe," he said at last, "Ah mun go and give mesel' up. Ah thowt it were a dream, and th' Lord wanted it done."

"Tha'rt none givin' theesel' up, lad? Tha were mad, lad—mad as a March hare. We found thee spoutin' out o' th' Bible after tha'd done it. But tha munna talk any moor till tha's had some breakfast."

Bricknoll had heard part of the conversation, and looked inquiringly at Brinton as he strode to the doorway. "Ah wish he'd kept mad, lad, or he could dee to-day," whispered the latter.

Plee drank tea in which there was some whisky he did not detect, and then Brinton ordered him to go to sleep. A wet mist since daybreak had been driving across the hills, but presently it cleared and Bricknoll called his leader outside. "Sithee yonder, Joe?" he said, pointing to the hillside opposite, up which two figures were climbing.

"Ay, it's a pair o' bobbies," said Brinton calmly. "We mun keep our eyes oppen; they'll be this road to-day or to-morrow."

Plee spoke little during the day, to Brinton's relief. Late in the afternoon he got up and staggered to the door of the hut. "Are th' police lookin' for me, Joe?" he asked.

"Ah reckon so," returned Brinton shortly.

"We'd better go back, Joe."

"When we leave here, lad," said Brinton, with an oath, "it'll be to a safer place."

Brinton had to help him back to bed again, and he lay looking at the roof of the hut till darkness came.

As soon as darkness fell Brinton and Bricknoll took it by turns to watch outside for Ingham. It was ten o'clock before he appeared.

"Speak low, Bill," said Brinton, in a whisper; "he's come to his senses. What's the news?"

"Th' police are lookin' everywheer for thee and him. Ah dunna think they know it's Tom and me wi' thee. Only my folks seed me, but Ah believe, from what they say, as th' police think we're somewheer here."

"Ay, we know. We seed two this mornin'. How are things?"

"Th' mester's alive still, or were when Ah left, but they say it's only a question o' days. Minvale's been pretty quiet since Sunday. Ah got two-three bob and some 'bacca."

"Ah wish it were sovereigns, lad, and we could get him to America."

Brinton took him in to Plee. "Here's Bill Ingham back from Minvale, lad," he said. "Th' mester's alive and goin' on well, so dunna thee trouble."

Plee looked at Ingham as if for confirmation. "That's reet," said Ingham.

The sick man gazed away from them and after a pause spoke. "Ah thowt in me mad temper Ah were doin' th' Lord's work. Ah mun go back."

"Tha mun have summat to eat and drink and then go to sleep," said Brinton, with decision; and he made him swallow a dram of whisky and water. He lay afterwards with his eyes closed, and did not answer when spoken to, but he was not asleep. He was trying to conceive why it was that he had been given mentally bound into Satan's hands. He had given the unbeliever cause to mock and point the finger; he had caused his church and his brethren to be held in derision, and the thought was agony. What had been the state of his soul that Satan had found so easy lodgment? He passed the weeks of the strike under review. His wife's illness and death had been sent to prove him, and he had been found wanting. It had been a supreme trial and he had failed, and to that sharpest pang of bereavement was added all the deeps of self-humiliation.

The long agony of the night almost sent his reason tottering again.

In the morning he looked white and ill and could eat nothing, but Brinton, with oaths and language of feigned violence, forced on him his one remedy, and then called his lieutenants outside for conference.

"Wheer done yo' think Ah could borrow ten pound?" he asked. "We canna get him far away without brass."

"Tha meight as well ask for a million while tha'rt about it," said Bricknoll sourly.

"If Ah thowt any mon wi' a pocketful were passin' along theer," said Brinton, pointing to the lonely highway in the far distance below them, "Ah'd turn highwayman this minit. It meks me mad to think as ten pound meight save th' lad from hangin', or transportin' at th' best. Ah've been wonderin' if it'd be any good axin' th' young parson. In one way Ah believe he'd do it, but Ah reckon his religion meight stand in th' road."

"He meight," said Bricknoll, who was ready to grasp at anything that would end this uncomfortable and foolish stand on the hills.

"Tha wouldna care to go and ax him, Tom, Ah reckon? None for theesel', but to ax him in my name? Tha'd have to go to him on th' quiet."

"Ah dunna know; he could only say No, Ah reckon."

"Ah'll toss if tha likes. Tails for, heads not."

"Reet."

Brinton took a penny from his pocket and tossed.

"Heads it is," he said disappointedly. "Well," brightening, "we'll put it off to-day and talk it o'er agen to-morrow. Th' lad looks rare and badly this mornin'. Ah believe it's all comin' back to his mind, and it'll be bad for him. Why didna he dee?"

An hour later Ingham, who had strolled to the farther shoulder of the hill, ran back to say that the police were coming. They were crossing the stream at the foot of the hill. "They'll be up here in less than hawf an hour," he said.

Brinton acted promptly and calmly. "When they get up here we'll be down at th' bottom yonder—they looked theer yesterday. Come on and help me hide, what we canna carry, under yonder big stones. Tom, thee chuck some stones o'er th' fire, as if it were a chance heap."

Almost to the summit of the hill on which they were the rough, mortarless stone walls had been carried in a straight line, and it was of them that Brinton was about to make use. Bricknoll carried the gear, and he and Ingham assisted Plee. They gained the shelter of a wall before the constables came in sight, and screened by it passed down the hill, while the policemen clambered up. At the foot of the descent they lay sheltered, while the hut and adjacent rocks were searched.

Brinton laughed as he leaned against the wall, with his pipe in his mouth. "It meks me feel young agen, Tom," he said. "Many a time when Ah were a lad and bathin' in th' cut [canal] th' bobbies 'ould come, and we had to swim across, carryin'

our clothes. Ah remember once they coom on both sides, and theer were we runnin' across Dyer's fields stark naked. Eh, but it were rare fun, and this puts me in mind of it."

From the summit the constables took a long and careful survey of all sides of the hill, but the wall was an effective screen to the fugitives, who, when the searchers moved on, regained their camp by the other side of the wall. From the rocks above it Brinton and Ingham watched the constables searching two or three miles to the east. All danger was over for that day.

Late in the afternoon rain came down heavily, and Bricknoll became grumpy again, and Brinton to restore him to good humour started a sing-song. "It's Sat'day neet, Tom," he said; "we'll just fancy we're enjoyin' oursels in th' Wheatsheaf."

"It looks like th' Wheatsheaf, doesna it?" growled Bricknoll.

"A bit," returned Brinton, "and there'll none be th' missis to find fault wi' thee when tha gets whoam. By gum, lad! Ah'll bet hoo's thankin' me for tekkin' thee away for a week. Hoo's been havin' a good time for once. Never thee say out agen me to her after this; Ah reckon hoo'll howd me up as an example to thee."

Bricknoll had to laugh, and allowed himself to be persuaded to sing his one song, "When I'm Alone," thrice.

Ingham had a fine tenor voice, and from comic and sentimental songs he passed on to "Comfort Ye" and other sacred airs. "Ah allus did say,"

was Brinton's comment, "as Christians were wide awake enough to get howd o' some o' th' best music. Tha can sing, Bill, and no mistake."

Plee interrupted him. He had been lying down with abstracted gaze, looking, as he believed, into his own heart, but at last he got up and touched Brinton on the arm. "Joe," he said, "Ah mun go and give mesel' up."

Brinton started to his feet, dominant in a moment. "Nay, tha doesna, lad," he said, in a quiet but inflexible tone. "Tha hit a mester, and tha winna find any justice from th' mesters that'll try thee. Afore we mek up our minds we mun hear whether he's goin' to live or not. If he doesna we'll get thee away to Ameriker."

Plee shook his head with a slight smile. "Ah'm weary, Joe."

"Ah see tha art, but Ah canna help it, lad. We'll have some brass by Tuesday, Ah hope, and then we'll cut from here to'rds London. Sithee, lad, get to thy Bible, and leave us to do what's best."

With a weary smile Plee turned away as he thought of how he had read his Bible. Those stern denunciations of the ungodly and the oppressor and the scenes of bloodshed no longer rang true. Joshua and Judges seemed remote from Minvale and its people now.

Bricknoll went late to the inn for victuals. Jame-son met him in the stables. "Th' police have been about here, on and off, all day," he said. "A chap as were in just now said he'd heard the strike were likely to be ended soon."

"How?" asked Bricknoll eagerly.

"He didna know any particulars, but he said he'd heard owd Slayter were rare and bad." Bricknoll nodded by way of reply, and departed cautiously. Brinton said nothing when he heard the news; it was too indefinite.

CHAPTER XXIX

CAPITULATION

SOON after seven on the Sunday morning Brinton awoke and got up. It was hardly twilight and a chilly wind was blowing, but he went outside to get a breath of fresh air before he began to light a fire. He started with surprise. In the dim light he counted eleven constables climbing the slope of the hill.

He darted back into the hut and aroused his companions. "Come on," he cried; "there's an army of bobbies comin' up. In two-twos it'll be as warm here as anybody could want." And he picked up and flourished an oak cudgel he had taken from Jameson's stables.

"What dost' mean to do, Joe?" asked Bricknoll, in a slightly scared tone.

"Why, keep 'em out, mon," responded Brinton, almost gaily. "While Ah'm keepin' 'em out thee and Bill mek a hole in that wall; yo' can very likely get Josh away while Ah'm havin' a bout with 'em. Ah wish they hadna come at this time o' day. It's none playin' fair," with a laugh.

He stood in the doorway awaiting them. He had no illusions regarding his conduct. He knew

that it meant imprisonment for himself, but he hoped his comrades might get away with Plee, and in his present mood nothing else mattered.

A sergeant advanced a few paces towards him. "I call on you to surrender in the Queen's name. Don't be foolish now ; there are a dozen of us here and you haven't a chance."

Brinton's eyes gleamed and he laughed. "Ah dunna care if there's a thousand, lad. By gum ! yo've summat afore yo'. Ah only hit a bobby once wi' me fist, many a long year since in Stopport, and he knowed it for weeks. Come on ; we're waitin' for yo'."

The superintendent who had charge of the party now came forward. "My good man," he said, in a conciliatory tone, "this is very foolish. You are doing no good. And I've a lot of news for you. Mr. Slayter is getting better, the strike is over, and the hands are going back to work on Monday. So you see it's no good making a bother."

"Even if what yo' say is true it's nowt to do wi' this business," returned Brinton grimly. "Ah dunna want to hurt yo', but there'll be some damage done if yo' dunna keep off."

"We want Josiah Plee," said the superintendent. "Come now, don't be foolish. We are bound to arrest him sooner or later."

"Are yo' ?" said Brinton, still more grimly. "Some of yo'll get hurt first."

Bricknoll and Ingham stood listening, and felt very uncomfortable. Resistance to the police and the punishment it involved they had not foreseen.



"I CALL ON YOU TO SURRENDER IN THE QUEEN'S NAME."

It was rank foolishness, but they were under Brinton's sway, and without a word, when he turned to them and, in an undertone, told them to get on with their duties, they obeyed him.

The superintendent had no wish for a violent encounter, and he took counsel with the sergeant whether they could not gain their object by strategy. "It's a pity, Jackson, to bring more troubles on the fool if it can be prevented. He looks strung up to fighting pitch."

"I wish we had a hose and a good supply of water. We couldn't smoke them out, I suppose? We'd best let a couple get on the roof and strip it."

Brinton watched their conference, and his eyes gleamed savagely. "Ah warn yo' agen," he said; "someb'dy will dee afore this is finished."

But Brinton was not destined to kill anybody. In the excitement of the preparations for battle he had forgotten Plee, who was standing quietly behind with set, pale face, listening to the colloquy. His brain was still like a fallen building, a tangle of disordered thoughts, but it was clear enough to comprehend what dangers his companions were facing on his behalf. As Brinton turned to speak to his comrades Plee slipped past him out of the doorway. "Here Ah am," he cried, and in a moment the police had surrounded him.

Brinton shouted a savage oath; Bricknoll and Ingham sighed in relief. Brinton stepped outside the doorway. "Eh, Josh, lad," he said sorrowfully, "dost' know what tha'rt doin'? They'll

have no mercy on thee. Say th' word and we'll get thee back in spite of 'em all."

Plee shook his head. "This is th' best thing, Joe."

Brinton gazed around, and then his gaze came back to Plee. "Well, well, lad," he said, in the same sorrowful tone, "tha doesna know. Ah reckon there's no help for it now, so we may as well give in. It werena what Ah looked for, by a long chalk. Ah wouldna ha' cared what it'd cost if we could only have got thee safe to Ameriker."

"Will you surrender?" asked the superintendent.

"Ay, if yo'll give yo'r word there'll be no handcuffs. We'll all come quiet, but if there's owt o' that yo'll have to feight for it."

The chief looked at him for a moment. "I give you my word," he said.

The superintendent walked by Brinton's side. "This has been very foolish, you know; you couldn't have got him away."

"It looks damned foolish th' way it's ended," Brinton retorted. "That poor lad hanged for what he did when he were mad! Ah wouldna hang a jackass for Sam's sake."

"There will be no hanging, my man;" and Brinton heard the news.

"Ah didna think Ah should ever be sorry for Sam," said Brinton slowly; "but if what yo' say is reet he'd better be dead—except for Josh's sake, theer. By gum! it seems he did end th' strike after all. He'll have to pay dear for it, Ah

reckon, for, mad or not, th' rich'll have no mercy on him; but he did summat—he did moor than all th' rest of us. Well, Ah'm glad th' strike's o'er; but, Ah tell yo', yo'd never have tekken him if he hadna done what he did. Mad! you ow't to have heared him ravin'. For three days he knew nowt or nob'dy, and the things he said about his missis would ha' brokken yo'r heart if yo'd been theer. Ah kept him alive wi' whisky, and Ah were a foo'. Ah ow't to have let him dee."

It was on the stroke of noon when the prisoners were taken to the lock-up at Minvale, and their advent made a sensation. Mrs. Brinton, when she heard the news, put a shawl over her head and ran in great agitation to get a word with her husband. When they came in sight she ran forward and threw her arms about his neck. "Eh, lad!" she asked, in a scared voice, "have they tekken thee up?"

Brinton disengaged himself smilingly. "Ay, lass, but dunna thee fret theesel'; Ah shall soon be out. They dunna really want me, but th' super theer"—indicating the chief officer who stood close at hand—"ses he were goin' to make sure one handsome mon went in th' lock-up, for there's been none in his time."

But Mrs. Brinton could not laugh with the others. "Eh, Joe! Ah didna think tha'd go off in th' road tha did without lettin' me know. Why didna tha take me? Ah could ha' looked after yo' all gradely."

"Oh, ah," retorted Brinton, "tha had two-three weeks at Mellor, and tha wanted another easy time.

Ah didna tell thee becos Ah knowed tha'd want to go too. Tha 'd have enjoyed theesel', but tha canna have everythin' at once. It beats sayside into fits up yonder. If tha behaves theesel' and allus lets me have me own road Ah'll tek thee some day when we're better off, for it gives one such a appetite we should want forty bob a week, Ah reckon."

Mrs. Brinton had to smile, but her face became careworn again the next moment. "Eh, lad, tha doesna know what a week Ah've had. Ah could hardly sleep a wink for wonderin' about thee."

"Ah reckon it's becos tha'rt none well, but th' truth is tha'rt gettin' softer every day. Here Ah've been enjoyin' mesel', livin' like a feghtin' cock, and tha'rt as soft as that! Ah'm all reet, and so is Tom and Bill. Ah wish yon poor lad were."

"Eh, poor lad," said Mrs. Brinton, and went and flung her arms round Plee's neck and kissed him.

Donnimore visited them in the lock-up as soon as he heard of their return. It was not the time to tell Brinton that his action had not been as wise as praiseworthy, and he made no reference to it. "You have heard that the strike is over, of course. I am very glad—very glad."

Brinton nodded and pointed to Plee. "Ah hope yo'll do what yo' can for him; sir. Give my respects to th' young lady, and tell her hewere mad at th' time and for days after."

"We know it, Mr. Brinton," Donnimore replied in a whisper. "You can be sure that everything will be done for him that can be."

"Ah'm glad this strike's o'er, sir, but—well, we're all glad it's o'er."

"I know what you feel," said Donnimore.

"How's owd Matthew, sir? If they'll let him come in Ah wish yo'd send him. Ah shouldna have been surprised to hear he were dead or next door to it."

"He is coming presently, Mr. Brinton. He and Mrs. Lemmer have been suffering greatly."

"Ay, Ah know. Eh, but Matthew's a mon—a gradely mon. Ah said it at th' beginnin', when two-three had summat to say, that Ah'd rayther have his soort helpin', when summat big had to be done; than a thousand o' my soort. And yo've done summat for yo'rsel' and th' church too, sir, Yo'll find 'em more ready to listen to yo' after this."

"And you yourself, Mr. Brinton?" asked Donnimore, with a smile.

Brinton smiled likewise. "Nay, nay, sir, Ah'm none a church or chapel goer. Ah can do moor good by standin' outside and tellin' yo' what yo' owt to do. If Ah coom inside Ah meight be no better than some o' t'others, and how could Ah point out their faults?"

"We need telling our faults inside," said Donnimore, with a laugh, "and you are the man to do it. You will appear before the magistrates in the morning, but I am going to bail you three out."

Brinton went up to him and whispered in his ear. "Nay, sir, yo' can bail Tom and Bill out if yo' like, but Ah winna let th' lad be left alone. He meight go stark mad agen."

“You had better come out with your friends, Mr. Brinton. The doctor will be here presently, and he will have every attention.”

“Ah wish th’ doctor ’ould give him summat so as he’ll never wake agen. Ah were a foo’.”

Shortly after Lemmer was admitted. The week’s tragedy had weighed grievously upon him. His shoulders were more bent, his face paler, but he called up a smile to greet them, which heightened the look of suffering on his features.

He shook hands with them in silence, coming to Plee last, whose hand he held long and affectionately as he gazed tenderly at the young man.

“Ah were wrong, Matthew,” said Plee, his tone more rational than it had been for weeks. “Ah thowt as God had called me to it, but Ah’m feart now it were th’ devil.”

Lemmer’s smile was a benediction, and he spoke in a tone of cheerful courage. “Eh, lad, if it were th’ devil he o’erreached hissels. Tha’s suffered, lad, and Ah’m feart”—his tone broke for a moment—“Ah’m feart tha’ll be bruised sore, but th’ Lord has a lot for thee to do somewheer.”

“Dunna thee trouble about me, Matthew,” answered Plee, smiling as though it devolved on him to comfort the older man.

“Dunna thee trouble about any of us, Matthew,” put in Brinton, to divert the conversation. “We’ve had a good week out yonder on thy brass, owd mon, livin’ on th’ fat o’ th’ land, and thy brass has bowt moor whisky than it did in all thy lifetime. It kept Josh theer alive, and we’re all back, well and

hearty. If tha'd been twenty year younger Ah should ha' had thee with us—it'd have made thee a lad agen. By gum! what shall we do, owd mon, now there's nob'dy to feight? We shall——"

Lemmer put his hand on Brinton's arm. "Nay, lad, we shall have enough to feight, thee and me. Ah hope to have thee feightin' at me side from now."

Brinton laughed. "Nay, owd mon, as Ah tow'd th' young parson just now, Ah shall stand outside and tell yo' how to feight, and wheer th' devil is, and that's summat. Ah can save yo' from hittin' nowt if yo'll listen to me."

The conversation ceased, but still Lemmer lingered, and Brinton turned to him with a smile. "Ah know what's in thy mind, Matthew. Tha'd like to have a bit o' prayer afore tha goes. Well, just for this once, becos tha'rt a bonny feighter, owd man—a bonny feighter, who'd let theesel' be cut in little bits afore tha'd give in—we'll kneel down with thee. Come on, Tom; come on, Bill—if for nowt else than just to oblige th' owd war-horse"; and, smiling on Lemmer, Brinton knelt down, and the others followed his example.

The court was held at Mossdale, four miles away, and thither next morning the four delinquents were carried. There were few of the Minvale folk present, for Brinton had requested Lemmer to tell them generally that the holiday was over and their place was in the factory and print-works.

The charge against Ingham, Bricknoll, and

Brinton, that of aiding and abetting Plee to resist lawful authority, was taken first; but the superintendent explained that he did not wish to press the charge, and the chairman, after a homily, intimated that they would be released on payment of costs.

"We canna pay just now," said Brinton cheerfully. "Money's scarce in Minvale." But Donni-more rose and said that he would see the amounts were paid.

Plee was put on his trial for inflicting grievous bodily harm. He stood up and pleaded guilty in a clear voice. The depositions of the domestic and the policeman at The Hollies, Miss Slayter, and the doctor were taken, and the superintendent gave evidence of his arrest. His flight was referred to, but against that Brinton protested strongly. "Nay, he didna, gentlemen," he ejaculated; "he werena for goin', but we made him. We'd have got him safe away if we could, and Ah tell yo' he were as mad as a March hare."

Brinton was censured for his interruption. He and his two comrades gave evidence as to Plee's condition on the Sunday night and during the ensuing week, and then, bail being refused, the prisoner was committed to the assizes, which would be held a month later.

CHAPTER XXX

THE FRUITS OF THE CAMPAIGN

MR. BENTLEY protested to Mabel and Donnimore against the capitulation to the strikers; but in his heart he was pleased, and his works opened on the Tuesday, and Minvale and its neighbourhood hummed with machinery again. Most of the people were back in their houses by the middle of the week. Several families had left the town, and there was accommodation for those whose dwellings had been burnt down. There was one glad week of work before Christmastide, and many expressed their thankfulness that Christmas Day was on a Sunday, and so no working-day was lost.

Mr. Slayter was able to go out of doors with an attendant; but it was plain that his day as a man among men was over. He babbled about childish things, and like a child was amused and happy over trifles and at times peevish and stubborn. His friends came and saw him, and went away to tell others that it would have been less cruel if he had been killed outright. It was pitiful to see the keen business man in his second childhood, and of all the tragedies that centred round the strike this was not the least poignant.

Amongst others who came was Pederton. When the news of the attack on Mr. Slayter reached Manchester he at once wrote to Mabel, begging her to command his services in any way, and offering to come to Minvale, if she thought it desirable, to take charge of the business interests. He was bitterly disappointed when he understood from her letter of thanks that his presence was unnecessary. He did not, however, lose hope until he went to Minvale to see Mr. Slayter. His eyes were keen in all that concerned Mabel, and a few minutes were sufficient to show him that his dream was over.

The next day he went up to Horridge. "Please don't say a word, old chap, but I've lost—the parson's won. That fellow hit me as hard as he hit Slayter," and he turned abruptly away.

"My dear," said Donnimore on Christmas night, when he and Mabel had dined together, "when shall we be married?"

Mabel coloured and smiled. "I—I had not thought about it, Frank."

"There is now no bar, dearest. Your father is quite incapable of giving or withholding his consent. We have been through some bitter experiences here in Minvale, and there is almost a new Mabel Slayter and Frank Donnimore. I feel, my darling, that our marriage would be as the precursor of a new Minvale too."

"I'll think about it, Frank. It would take some time to get ready."

"Nonsense, *ma belle*—you are ready now."

"Frank, I really expected better things of you. A girl expects to have months of preparation before her, and, besides, that preparation is one of her greatest delights. It would be cruel to rob me of it, Frank."

"Shall we say the end of January then?"

"Frank! A month! It is impossible. Besides, Fred will be here in February. I would rather he were here before we fix on a date."

Donnimore sighed affectedly. "I suppose I must yield then," he said. "But after the last few weeks I am all impatience to have you fettered to me."

"There are several big questions to be settled, dear, when Fred arrives."

"Yes, I know. But above all, dearest, I want you if possible not to make over your works to a company. As owner or part-owner of the works what an opportunity you would have in Minvale!"

"Fred will have the principal voice in the matter, you know, dear."

"Yes, of course; but you will have some voice, Mab. But tell me, dearest, frankly; you are not as anxious to shake yourself free of Minvale as you were?"

Mabel blushed a little and then smiled. "No, Frank. I am not the petulant child I was when you first knew me. In a few weeks I have grown into a woman. I'm afraid you will be horribly disappointed, but I don't believe while I have any artistic sense I shall think it pretty."

"It isn't pretty, *ma belle*. I am doubtful if it could be made pretty. But it can be made brighter

and contented and sanitary. Radiant, sympathising Mabel passing through its streets would be enough to brighten its moral atmosphere."

Mabel made no comment, and Donnimore went on.

"I should be very loath to leave it, dearest. I too have developed since I came. It has been a rather rough school, but an effective one. I have come to love some of its sturdy folk. There are Lemmer and his wife—when I shrink from sacrifice I hope to think on them; there are Ingham and Brinton and others. That wild escapade of Brinton's on the hills yonder draws me to him; he, like myself, must have Irish blood in his veins."

"I do like some of them. I am going to try to like them all," said Mabel soberly.

"That is it, my dearest. It is the whole secret, I believe. You can succeed by perseverance in that as in other things. Our work, I truly believe, is here in Minvale, and not only our work but our happiness. How could I think badly of Minvale or fail to do my best for it when it gave you to me?"

"Oh, Frank!" she said, and went forward and put her arms round his neck.

Fred Slayter arrived at Minvale early in February. Donnimore was not at all attracted by him when they were introduced. His mouth and eyes and his manner, and at times the tones of his voice, reminded him of the father. He wished, he told Mabel again and again, he had been home during the strike. He would have helped the governor to teach them such a lesson as they could never forget. He did not, however, blame Mabel for yielding to their

demands. He took the tolerant view that it was womanlike, and, after all, it paid better to have the works going than have them idle. Mabel tried to show him the other side, but he laughed at her with good-humoured tolerance, and told her she had grown such a pretty girl that she must infallibly be right. He thought, he added, she would have looked higher than a mere cleric, but life in that remote corner of the world, where there was little county society, had its limitations, he was prepared to admit.

He and Donnimore having little in common treated each other with respect, and Captain Slayter admitted to his sister that for a clergyman Donnimore was not at all a bad sort. It was clear to the vicar that the captain had no inclination to play the part of a cotton-lord. "Gad!" he remarked, "when I come back here I'm glad I persuaded the governor to let me go into the army. It was deuced hard work to bring him to it, but the mater helped me. The only thing to be said for this kind of life here is that it pays well in spite of strikes."

He was keen in his profession, it was patent, and he raised no objection to Mabel's proposition that a competent manager should be installed, and Mabel, with Donnimore's advice and assistance, should carry on the works. "So long as the income doesn't drop much I don't care what it is," he remarked. The Hollies was to be let, and Mr. Slayter was to make his home with his daughter.

"Poor governor!" said the captain, when the business was settled; "it's a pity to see a man who was as keen as mustard brought to this. I hope

they'll give the fellow twenty years. Now, look here, Donnimore, when is the wedding to be? My leave expires at the end of June, but I want to spend May with Stretchley in Ireland, and in June he and I will be in Norway. Let it be soon, now; there's nothing to wait for."

The end of April, when Eastertide would be over, was fixed, and Captain Slayter left for fishing in Scotland.

Competent counsel had been briefed for Plee's defence. Lemmer and his wife had been allowed to see him while awaiting his trial, and reported that he was now quite sane, but had been in the doctor's hands and looked very thin and worn.

"What did the doctor meddle with him for?" demanded Brinton. "Why couldna he let th' lad dee?"

When at last the dreaded day came all his friends in the court were struck by his appearance. He looked fragile, and, to Donnimore's thinking, in his eyes was a sea of anguish. The smile with which he greeted his friends was pathetic; and Brinton, whom the court had stricken chill, whispered savagely to Lemmer, "Ah wish with all me heart th' lad meight dee, here and now."

Lemmer shook his head. "Nay, lad, Ah pray that he may have strength given him to sustain him. If they're goin' to send him to jail Ah believe in me heart it's because th' Lord has work for him to do theer."

"Eh, yo' Christians!" retorted Brinton. "If

they were goin' to tek thy life inch by inch tha'd believe it'd do someb'dy good. But when Ah see all this here"—indicating the solemn and sombre array of the court—"Ah can nobbut call mesel' a foo' for lettin' 'em tek him. If Ah'd had any gumption Ah should have got him away."

When Sir James Grately took his seat Brinton's spirits fell lower. He looked at the pale and somewhat ascetic face, and the deep-set eyes, almost hidden by the bushy grey eyebrows, and whispered again to Lemmer, "He's an ornery devil is yon, owd mon, or Ah'm no judge. But Ah shall have me say if he were fifty times as big a mon as he fancies hissel'. Eh, what a foo' Ah were!"

Plee pleaded guilty, and the proceedings were mercifully brief. Donnimore and Lemmer gave evidence regarding his character and the state of his mind at the time and the causes that had unbalanced his reason, and Ingham, Bricknoll, and Brinton as to his state while on the hills. Brinton turned to the judge when he had answered the questions put to him. "If ever a mon were mad, sir—Ah mean my lord—he were, and Ah'm only sorry he didna dee. Ah've know him a good many year, and in his reet senses he wouldna hurt a flea [fly]. He's one o' them Christians, sir, as believes——" But at this point Brinton was commanded to stop.

But Brinton would not stop. "Nay, sir, yo're here to hear th' truth. He's one o' them real soort o' Christians——"

"Silence!" cried Sir James.

“And he were stark mad at the time, as everybody knows; yo’ mun tek our word for it.”

Sir James glared, but Brinton stepped down unconcernedly from the box.

The prison doctor testified that the prisoner was now sane and had been while he had him under observation, but he did not doubt that it was possible he had been insane when the crime was committed.

The jury’s verdict had been foreseen, but Sir James’s tones fell like strokes of doom on Lemmer’s ears.

This was the outcome of those scenes of violence which had disturbed the peace and quiet of the village of Minvale, and it was only by a hair’s-breadth that the prisoner at the bar was not on his trial on the capital charge. There was no doubt that the prisoner had been carried away by his passion to the verge of insanity—the ancients had it that anger was short madness. It was a warning to all in court to control their tempers. He had listened patiently to what had been said on the prisoner’s behalf, and had been greatly influenced by it, and in consequence had taken a merciful view; but a crime whose results were so tragic could not lightly be passed over, and the sentence of the court was that he be kept in penal servitude for seven years.

Mrs. Lemmer gasped convulsively, as if her lungs were empty; Lemmer turned white and hid his face in his hands; Donnimore bit his lip; while Brinton, looking angrily and defiantly at the court, said “Damn yo’!” with great distinctness, but in the



HE TOOK HOLD OF LEMMER'S ARM AND DRAGGED HIM FROM THE COURT.

slight confusion no notice was taken of it. He took hold of Lemmer's arm and dragged him from the court, his face white with passion. "What did Ah tell yo'?" he demanded truculently, glaring on husband and wife. "Th' rich side with th' rich. Ah were a damned foo' ever to let 'em get howd of him. Tek him whoam and let him pray, mother," turning to Mrs. Lemmer, and indicating Lemmer with a nod. "Eh! if Ah could get at yonder owd mon in his wig Ah'd punce [kick] him through th' town. 'A merciful view,' did he? By gum! Ah'd tek another."

Lemmer could say nothing, and his white face and Mrs. Lemmer's tearless eyes added to Brinton's fury. "Yon's another Christian o' Sam's soort. Ah could see what he were when he coom in. Go yo'r ways whoam, yo' two. Ah'm goin' to stuff me skin full of ale to mek me forget."

"Dunna, lad—Ah wish tha wouldna; it'd be moor than Ah can bear to think on to-day," entreated Lemmer, and his wife seconded him. Donnimore too, who had approached unnoticed, also joined in the plea.

"It's not a brave way, Mr. Brinton, if you could only see it," he said. "I have seen enough of you to know that it is the manly cause that appeals to you."

Brinton glared at them for a moment, and then his eye softened. "If Ah thowt it'd hurt yon owd rogue, or it'd help th' lad to bear it, Ah'd get blind drunk to-neet. But just to please thee, owd mon," to Lemmer, "Ah winna go and have none now. Sithee, Matthew, and yo', mother, Ah wish yo'd

tek a lesson and none go bearin' other folks' troubles as if they were yo'r own. But theer ! yo' canna help it ; it's th' road yo're built. Go and read yo'r Bible ; it'll do yo' moor good than th' ale will me, Ah reckon. Dunna mind me, sir ! " to Donnimore ; " it's soort o' knocked me out o' time for a bit, and Ah canna get gradely goin'. Come on, Matthew, owd mon ; let's tek th' first train back. Ah hope th' lad may dee afore th' month's out in spite of what tha ses. Th'art prayin' in thy heart, and Ah am too, only another road. Come on, yo' two. Ah wish Ah could mek yo' blind drunk for two-three days."

He turned on Donnimore.

" Thank yo', sir, and thank th' young lady. Yo' both tried yo'r best yonder ; and, by gum, sir ! yo'r best is worth havin', in strikes or owt else."

Donnimore held out his hand. " So is yours, Mr. Brinton. I am glad indeed we shall have you to rely on."

It was perhaps symbolical that the strike should end with the stern voice of the Assize Court and the glad sound of wedding-bells. Minvale made merry indeed on that balmy April morning when Captain Slayter gave his sister into Donnimore's keeping. The works were closed for the day, and to rejoice the hearts of all it was announced that three days' pay would be given by the bride. It was a glad, a happy day ; even Lemmer's face had a smile and a look of quiet happiness on it, and he it was that was called upon to propose the health of the bride

and bridegroom at that typical northern dissipation, a sandwich tea, which Donnimore had provided. Sometimes, said the old man, speaking with a fervour that thrilled his audience, and especially the bride and bridegroom who were present, we wish people happiness with our lips only, but on this occasion they wished it with all their hearts. In the bitter times they had been through with Donnimore in the van they had learned to love and trust him, and they were glad he had won such a beautiful, good-hearted bride. It was their joy to know that the bride and bridegroom would be their master and mistress. You could build up a position of a sort on wealth and still more wealth, but the only enduring position was that you built on a people's love, and that Mr. and Mrs. Donnimore had in full measure that day.

Brinton was called upon by universal voice to second, but it was some time before he would respond. "Ah'm no spaker, as yo' known," he said, "and if Ah were Ah couldna put it as well as owd Matthew theer. He's a bonny feighter, is Matthew, and so is Mester Donnimore. Wi' them two at yo'r back yo' could face—— well, Ah winna say wheer wi' ladies present. And Ah see Tom Bricknoll and Bill Ingham—yo' can lay yo'r money on them every time. Bill's going to be wed soon, and Ah'm goin' to do me best to see he has a gradely weddin'. Ah hope someb'dy'll ax him to sing to-neet, for he can, and no mistake. He struck up for us when we were out yonder, and yo'd have thowt yo' were in church. Ax him to sing what he sung for us. Well,

th' ham's been rare and good, and so has th' tay, but it isna that has pleased us like seein' Mester Donnimore gettin' th' lass he wanted and Miss Slayter th' lad hoo wanted. Ah can tell Miss Slayter hoo owt to be rare and proud, for hoo's gotten—what many young women never get—hoo's gotten a mon for her husband."

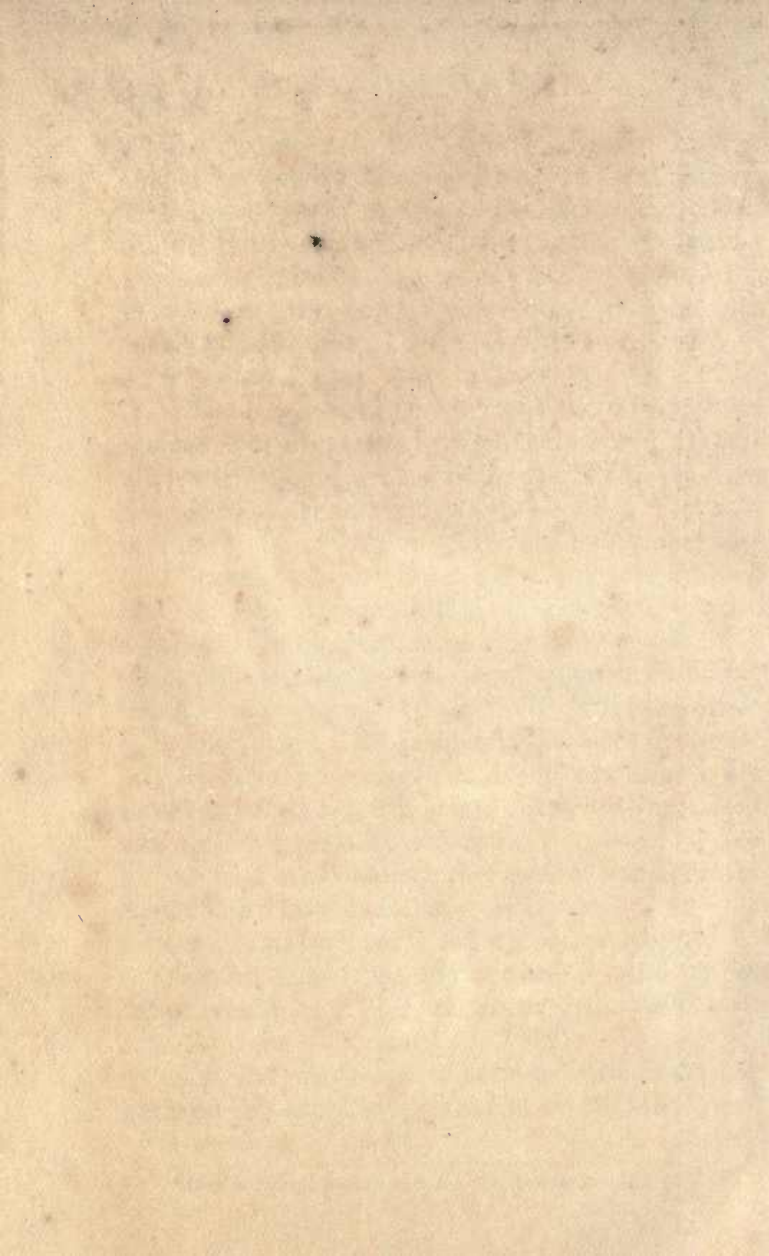
It was not, as the months went by, an improved Minvale but a new Minvale that appeared, for the spirit that ruled it was a new spirit. Those who had its good most at heart were wise enough not to look for new natures in men and women in a day, knowing that moral is even slower than physical growth, and the moral regeneration of mankind is only achieved by painful, unhasting endeavour. The strike and its miseries were soon forgotten by many, but there were some who could not forget the losses of the campaign. On Lemmer's face were lines that neither time nor happiness could eradicate. He smiled as of yore, but it was a chastened smile, and some of his friends knew why.

"Ah wish Ah could see thee lookin' happier, owd mon," said Brinton one day.

"Ah am happy, lad," was the quiet reply.

"Ay, Ah know, but tha'rt like me—tha wishes things could ha' been different. Ah wish he'd deed."

"Nay, lad, nay—but if only th' cost could ha' fallen on my shoulders instead of on th' lad!"



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